Herodotus and the Presocratics

Inquiry and Intellectual Culture in the Fifth Century BCE

K. Scarlett Kingsley

HERODOTUS AND THE PRESOCRATICS

Herodotus' *Histories* was composed well before the genre of Greek historiography emerged as a distinct narrative enterprise. This book explores the *Histories*' place in its fifth-century BCE context, juxtaposing the text with the extant fragments of Presocratic treatises, as well as philosophizing tragedy and comedy. In doing so, it argues for the *Histories*' competitive engagement with contemporary intellectual culture. It demonstrates the ambition of the *Histories* as an experimental prose work, tracing its responses to key debates on relativism, human nature, and epistemology. In addition to expanding the intellectual milieu of which the *Histories* is a part and restoring its place in Presocratic thought, K. Scarlett Kingsley elucidates fourth-century philosophy's subsequent engagement with the work. In doing so, she contributes to a revision of the sharp separation between the ancient genres of philosophy and history. This title is part of the Flip it Open Programme and may also be available Open Access. Check our website Cambridge Core for details.

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For John

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Note on Texts and Translations

The text of Herodotus' *Histories* cited throughout as Hdt. is the Oxford Classical Text of N. G. Wilson (Oxford, 2015). In discussing Presocratic fragments I make use of the standard text and numbering from Diels-Kranz's sixth edition of *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin, 1951–2). Unless otherwise noted, translations of Greek and Latin are my own. I have benefitted from consulting D. Grene's *The History: Herodotus* (Chicago, 1987) and the Laks-Most Loeb series edition, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, 2016). Ancient texts that I refer to are taken from the Oxford Classical Text editions; exceptions to this general practice are indicated.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations of ancient authors are taken from the fourth edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Journal titles are abbreviated in line with *L'Année Philologique*. For convenience, I will abbreviate the following texts, commentaries, translations, and lexica as follows, and refrain from adding separate entries for them in the References section.

Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella	D. Asheri, A. Lloyd, and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV* (Oxford, 2007).
Baehr	J. C. F. Baehr, *Herodoti Halicarnassensis Musae*, 4 vols. (Lipsiae, 1856–61).
BNJ	I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby Online*, http://referenceworks.brill.online.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby.
Bowie	A. M. Bowie, *Herodotus:* Histories *Book VIII* (Cambridge, 2007).
Chantraine	P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque, Histoire des Mots* (Paris, 1968–80).
DK	H. Diels (ed.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*[6], 3 vols., rev. W. Kranz (Berlin, 1951–2).
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin, 1923–30; Leiden, 1940–58).
FHG	K. Müller and T. Müller (eds.), *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (Paris, 1853–83).
Flower-Marincola	M. A. Flower and J. Marincola, *Herodotus:* Histories *Book IX* (Cambridge, 2002).
Graham	D. W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2010).
HCT	A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes, and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1945–81).
Hornblower	S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1991–2008).

How-Wells	W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford, 1912).
IG I^3	D. M. Lewis et al. (eds.), *Inscriptiones Graecae*, vol. I. *Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores. Editio tertia* (Berlin, 1981–98).
KRS	G. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*^{2} (Cambridge, 1983).
Laks-Most	A. Laks and G. W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 2016).
Legrand	P.-E. Legrand, *Hérodote:* Histoires, 9 vols. (Paris, 1932–54).
Lobel-Page	E. Lobel and D. Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1955).
LSJ^9	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*^{9}, rev. H. Stuart-Jones et al. (Oxford, 1996).
Macan	R. W. Macan, *Herodotus: The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Books* (London, 1895); *Herodotus: The Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Books* (London, 1908).
MW	R. Merkelbach and M. L. West (eds.), *Fragmenta Hesiodea* (Oxford, 1967).
Olson-Sens	S. D. Olson and A. Sens (eds.), *Archestratos of Gela: Greek Culture and Cuisine in the Fourth Century BCE* (Oxford, 2000).
PCG	R. Kassel and M. Austin (eds.), *Poetae Comici Graeci*, 8 vols. to date (Berlin; New York, 1983–).
PMG	D. L. Page, *Poetae melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962).
Powell	J. E. Powell, *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Cambridge, 1938).
SEG	J. J. Hondius et al. (eds.), *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, 66 vols. to date (Leiden; Amsterdam; and Boston, 1923–).
SH	P. H. J. Lloyd-Jones and P. J. Parsons (eds.), *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Berlin, 1983).
Smyth	H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. G. Messing (Cambridge, 1984).
Stein	H. Stein (ed.), *Herodotos: Erklärt von H. Stein*, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1881–1901).
TrGF	R. Kannicht (ed.), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 5, *Euripides*, 2 parts (Göttingen, 2004).
Wilson	N. G. Wilson (ed.), *Herodoti Historiae*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2015).

CHAPTER 1

Introduction
Transtextual *Histories*: History, Philosophy, and Intellectual Culture

> Ξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖε, παρ᾽ ἡμέας γὰρ περὶ σέο λόγος ἀπῖκται πολλὸς καὶ σοφίης εἵνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης, ὡς φιλοσοφέων γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίης εἵνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας· νῦν ὦν ἵμερος ἐπεἳρεσθαι μοι ἐπῆλθέ σε εἴ τινα ἤδη πάντων εἶδες ὀλβιώτατον.
>
> (Hdt. 1.30.2)
>
> Athenian friend, such reports have come to us about you due to your wisdom and your travels – that you, as one who loves wisdom, have covered much ground for the sake of *theorie*. So now a desire has come over me to ask you whether there is some individual you have seen who is the most fortunate of all.

So opens the famous dialogue between the Lydian ruler Croesus and the Athenian "lover of wisdom," Solon. Croesus' court had already entertained, we are told, many of the sixth-century Greek "philosophers," *sophistai* (1.29.1).[1] These intellectuals traveled extensively throughout the Mediterranean, lecturing on cosmology, the natural world, physics and metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and theology, in addition to more metacritical thought on the art of speech and persuasion itself. Solon too traveled there. He left Athens, Herodotus tells us, after setting up laws for his fellow citizens, laws that could not be contested in his absence. His departure was also an opportunity for him to engage in *theorie* – a pilgrimage or journey beyond the polis to view a spectacle and, in this case, to practice philosophical contemplation.[2]

Theorie is closely tied to autopsy and the empirical acquisition of knowledge. Travel from the city as an eyewitness to foreign spectacles

[1] With Ostwald (1986), 259, "The Athenians made no attempt to differentiate sophists from philosophers." Lloyd (1979), 86–7, (1987), 93. On the verb φιλοσοφέων in this passage, Moore (2019), 131, persuasively argues: "*Philosophein* seems to name the way of life that appears oriented toward becoming a *sophos*."

[2] Nightingale (2001), 31–2, places Solon in the category of *theorie* in which one journeys for "knowledge and edification."

brings with it the potential for intellectual transformation, which the traveler is then able to bring back to the polis. Croesus, playing upon this notion, attempts to inscribe himself within Solon's expedition by bringing his guest face to face with his great wealth. The prominence of sight in this opening gambit is significant: He twice inquires whether Solon has seen someone (εἶδες . . . ἴδοι) who was the most fortunate of all. Building up to his self-serving question, Croesus connects Solon's travel with his wisdom and relies upon the philosopher's autopsy to provide the answer to his question.

It is for this reason all the more striking that Solon's answer nowhere refers explicitly to his travels or personal experience.[3] He responds to Croesus' questions but in each case declines to give an account based on his own spectatorship. Instead, he gives a virtuoso display of wisdom, outlining true well-being in his narration of the lives of Tellus and Cleobis and Biton. He then clarifies that the fragile basis for human happiness is due to the unpredictable action of the divine, which leads to his mathematical display-piece on the years, months, and days comprising a man's life. Here sight is reintroduced by Solon but as a warning: there are more things to see than one will desire (1.32.2: πολλὰ μὲν ἔστι ἰδεῖν τὰ μή τις ἐθέλει); every day is unlike the last and no pattern emerges.[4] The whole point of this performance of man's circumscribed temporality is to show that individual human experience provides little basis for wider inferences.[5] Solon rejects his host's emphasis on sight by pointing to the problem of appearance as opposed to reality, offering only: "you *appear* to me to have a marvellous fortune" (1.32.5: ἐμοὶ δὲ σὺ καὶ πλουτέειν μέγα φαίνεαι). But the use of the infinitive with φαίνεαι ("you seem to be") rather than the participle ("you evidently are") hints that this could just as easily be an illusion, as in fact it will turn out to be.[6] And while Solon's final pronouncement to Croesus is often translated as "one must look to the end of every affair" (1.33: σκοπέειν δὲ χρὴ παντὸς χρήματος τὴν τελευτήν), it is noteworthy that the verb is not ὁράω but σκοπέω. The latter is used not merely of sight but introspection and reflection.[7]

[3] Ker (2000), 311–15, finds Croesus misguided in his understanding of *theorie* as intellectual sightseeing. For a negative portrayal of sightseeing, Thucydides is skeptical of the Athenian desire to engage in *theoria* in the lead-up to the Sicilian expedition at 6.24.3; see Barker (2009), 256 n. 177.

[4] For a contrasting view, see Schepens (1980), where autopsy is *the* route to knowledge for Herodotus.

[5] The brevity of life is an obstacle to knowledge for Protagoras as well, e.g., DK 80 B 4.

[6] Cf. 1.86.5, where Croesus reveals to Cyrus that Solon viewed his wealth only to discount it.

[7] See Hedrick (2000), on the democratic formula, σκοπεῖν τῷ βουλομένῳ, where it refers to disclosing information, not merely "seeing," 132: "In several cases it is clear beyond reasonable doubt that the use of the formula implies that people should get access to the content of the text, that the text

Its importance is clear from Croesus' mistranslation of the sentiments of his guest, with whom he becomes thoroughly disgusted; he judges Solon stupid for requiring him "to look (ὁρᾶν) to the end of every affair." The distortion of the verb ironizes the ruler's inability to "see" the content of Solon's message and understand the value of this introspection.[8]

In line with his identification as a philosopher, Solon's quiet rebuff of visual perception as the criterion for truth has an impressive pedigree among philosophers in the intellectual milieu of the late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE. Parmenides too rejected experience, sight, and sound as avenues of truth in favor of judging by *logos* (DK 28 B 7.3–6). His successor, Melissus, was a strident opponent of autopsy as a criterion of truth, holding that sight is fundamentally misleading: "Hence it is clear that we do not see correctly, and that it is not correctly that these things seem to us to be many" (DK 30 B 8.5). And Herodotus' contemporary, Anaxagoras, illustrated the fragility of the sense of sight with the example of black and white paint, arguing that adding drops of one color to the other would, for some time, produce no change obvious to the human eye, despite it changing color with each drop in reality (DK 59 B 21). Sight fails to access the fine gradations that are nonetheless existent in matter. Meanwhile, for Solon an individual's sight fails to capture the encyclopedic breadth of human experience.

The dialogue's theme of human well-being is a staple in ethical debates taking place in philosophical circles.[9] It is reported that Anaxagoras articulated a philosophy of *eudaimonie*, "happiness." When asked "who was most happy," Aristotle records that "Anaxagoras too seems not to have supposed that the happy man is wealthy or powerful, for he said that he would not be surprised if he seemed someone strange to most people."[10] In his *Eudemian Ethics*, the same incident is recounted, though in this case Aristotle elaborates on Anaxagoras' concept of strangeness by suggesting

should somehow be *read*," *pace* Thomas (1989), 51. This is followed by Lasagni (2018), though she interprets it as a species of reading in this context. Thucydides uses the language of "seeing what is clear" (τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν) in his methodology chapter at 1.22.4; see Barker (2009), 262 n. 198.

[8] Problems associated with the visual field are thematized in the preceding Gyges-Candaules episode as well, Purves (2010), 139–40, 143–4. See de Heer (1969), 71–2, on a similar confusion of the referents of what is ὄλβιος in the dialogue, which for Croesus refers to wealth and for Solon to a human condition of a permanent lofty status that includes one's death.

[9] Terms used include εὐδαιμονίη: 1.32.1; ὄλβιος: 1.30.1, 30.2, 30.3, 31.1, 32.5, 32.7, 34.1; μακαρίζω: 1.31.3. See Irwin (2013), 276–7, for the Athenian context of *eudaimonie*.

[10] DK 59 A 30 = Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1179a13–17: ἔοικε δὲ καὶ Ἀναξαγόρας οὐ πλούσιον οὐδὲ δυνάστην ὑπολαβεῖν τὸν εὐδαίμονα εἰπὼν ὅτι οὐκ ἂν θαυμάσειεν, εἴ τις ἄτοπος φανείη τοῖς πολλοῖς. For the network of terms relating to happiness in this passage in line with epinician poetry, see Krischer (1993) and Crane (1996).

that the philosopher's response implies that well-being should be connected to a life lived according to justice or for *theoria*.[11] The de-emphasis of material wealth and power as markers of *eudaimonie* in favor of a paradoxical or strange theory of the fortunate individual has an obvious antecedent with the Croesus–Solon interview. The theory's connection of happiness to a life lived for *theoria* suggests that Anaxagoras and Herodotus were in dialogue with one another or – more plausibly – that Aristotle was reading Anaxagoras' theories in light of Herodotus' Solon. That Solon's admonitions immediately precede Anaxagoras' makes this all the more likely (1179a9–17). Indeed, when Diodorus Siculus' *Library* records the Solon–Croesus interview in the first century, the historian clarifies that Solon responded with the freedom of speech customary to philosophers, which affirms that Herodotus' lawgiver was later viewed in this light.[12]

Thematically and methodologically, Solon's interview with Croesus touches upon important issues preoccupying intellectual culture in the fifth century.[13] What is conspicuous about Herodotus' engagement is the way in which knowledge of the past is presented as a means of answering these questions. The identity of the most fortunate human lies in Athenian history in the figure of Tellus, whose life unites individual prosperousness with that of his descendants and his polis. When asked to award a second place, Solon returns to historical exempla through the Argives Cleobis and Biton.

I begin with the Solon–Croesus interview as its importance for the project of the *Histories* is difficult to overstate. As a programmatic episode, it provides a critical window into the horizon of expectation that what will become the genre of historiography carves out for its audience. In this context, the passage's emphasis on knowledge claims, on ethics, and on man's place in the cosmos is conspicuous. These topics speak to the aspirations of the *Histories* as a work in dialogue with contemporary philosophical thinkers and debates. More radically, the episode enacts a powerful metanarrative moment by using historical events to encode philosophical debates. By modeling Solon as an internal historian who discloses philosophical truths, the text "reads" itself. Solon's performance casts knowledge of Athenian and Argive history as the métier of the *sophistes*: the description of Tellus' life and death arises from Athenian

[11] Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1215b6–14.
[12] Diod. Sic. 9.2.2. Cf. 9.26.1. Identified as a philosopher at Aeschin. *In Ctes.* 257; Plut. *Sol.* 3.1.
[13] Democritus' philosophy of contentment as the goal of human life is similar, e.g., DK 68 A 167, B 3, B 191, B 189.

historical memory. The glorious deaths of the young Cleobis and Biton, correspondingly, develop out of Argive and Delphic tradition. Indeed, it is the pastness of their lives that allows Solon to establish their position in the ranks of human good fortune.[14] As a whole, the exchange demonstrates how historical memory opens up a new space for wisdom. In terms of the debate on well-being, history reveals itself as the only space in which the concept can be properly understood. Equally important is the way in which the dialogue resonates with the introduction of the *Histories*. With the identification of Croesus as the one most responsible for injustice against the Greeks, Herodotus turns to images of motion and travel (1.5.3: προβήσομαι "I will proceed," ἐπεξιών "going through") but applies them to his creation of the text. These metaphors serve as an introduction to the textual journey that will unfold, with visits to cities great and small.[15] As with Solon's journey to Sardis, metaphors of travel are leveraged into insight on the human condition and human well-being: as Herodotus affirms in the opening of the *Histories*, "knowing as I do that human well-being in no way remains in the same place, I will mention both [large and small cities] equally" (1.5.4: τὴν ἀνθρωπηίην ὦν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τὠυτῷ μένουσαν ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως).[16]

These introductory passages invite interpretation of the *Histories* by exploring the past in light of contemporary philosophical debates. Herodotus has fashioned a narrative that goes far beyond any individual human life, and it is this breadth that allows for the identification and analysis of wider philosophical patterns resistant to lived temporality. This is a potentiality that Herodotus' successor, Thucydides, will also exploit for historiography in his celebrated "methodology," with its orientation to the future value of his work (1.22.4). How then can the *Histories* be contextualized? As it precedes the fixed generic conventions that inform subsequent historiography, modern scholars have engaged in transtextual readings – readings that place the *Histories* in relation to other texts diachronically and synchronically – to shed light on the critical methods

[14] Montiglio (2005), 133–6, well notes that Solon's wandering is not presented as the source of his knowledge about human well-being.

[15] For Herodotus' hodological text, see Chapter 6 n. 62.

[16] With Baragwanath (2008), 108, this passage "seems intended (like Solon's observation that πᾶν ἐστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορή, 'everything human is a matter of chance,' 1.32.4) rather to warn against predictions of any sort of stability in human affairs."

that Herodotus operated with.[17] By fruitfully juxtaposing the text and its affinities to antecedent and contemporaneous literary culture, the stubborn image of Herodotus as looking backward to an archaic worldview has largely yielded to a deeper understanding of his cultural embeddedness. In particular, due to the work of Rosalind Thomas, it is now widely recognized that Herodotus operated within a mid- to late fifth-century scientific context.[18] Thomas' research moved the needle beyond simple intertextual parallels in the *Histories* with known philosophers to trace the "similar intellectual framework" of the historian's relationship to his intellectual milieu, one to which he is viewed as actively contributing.[19] In addition to providing updated discussions of passages on geography, ethnography, environmental determinism, and the rhetorical techniques and argumentation of epideictic performance culture, this research broke new ground by focusing much more closely upon late fifth- and fourth-century Hippocratic medical literature – in particular with regard to passages in the *Histories* discussing animal biology and natural science. Yet a recurring sentiment in this research is that Herodotus is "not, of course, interested in or informed about the more abstract philosophical arguments of the Presocratics... He is unmistakably drawn to the

[17] For transtextuality see Genette (1997), 1, "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts." Exemplary of this contextual approach is Luraghi (2001a). For recent work on Herodotus and tragedy, see Chiasson (1982), (2003); Gould (1989), 74–8; Saïd (2002); Griffin (2006); Sewell-Rutter (2007), 1–14. There is less work done on the *Histories* and comedy, but see Nesselrath (2014), 53–61. For ethnography, see Chapter 2 n. 2. For Herodotus and medical literature, see Moeller (1903); A. Lloyd (1975); Brandenburg (1976); Dawson and Harvey (1986); Lateiner (1986); Althoff (1993); Thomas (2000).

[18] Thomas (2000). Cf. Barth's conclusion (1964), 180: "Die Kenntnis dieser Erörterungen setzt im 5. Jh. unbedingt eine besonders intensive Beschäftigung mit der Philosophie voraus." ("The knowledge of these discussions necessarily presumes a particularly intensive preoccupation with philosophy in the fifth century.") Further antecedents include Morrison (1941), 12–13; Immerwahr (1956), 280, (1966); Pippidi (1960); Lloyd (1966); Lasserre (1976); Lachenaud (1978); Corcella (1984). For more recent treatments on philosophy and the *Histories*, see Raaflaub (2002), who gives a useful overview; Węcowski (2004); Provencal (2015); Schelske (2016).

[19] Commenting on the methodology of her predecessors, Thomas (2000), 17, notes that prior scholars had tended, "at least implicitly, to explain Herodotus via an earlier writer." Exemplary of this tendency is Maass (1887), who focused upon what he saw as the sophistic hypotext that had served as the exemplar for Herodotus in the Constitutional Debate. After an elaborate juxtaposition of the Debate with Isocrates' *Nikokles*, he ultimately derived it from a lost text of Protagoras. Similarly, Reitzenstein (1898), 42–63, argued that parallels between Theognis 1.43–52 Young, Herodotus' Constitutional Debate, and the *Anonymous Iamblichi* were evidence for an early (lost) Ionic source, περὶ εὐνομίας. This practice continues even with Dihle (1962), 218–20, who contended that there is a deep similarity in Herodotus' thought and style to the sophistic; however, at 212 he suggests that the second speech of Demaratus to Xerxes does not answer Xerxes, so it must come from another "sheet" (*Blatt*).

observable world."[20] The bold alignment of Herodotus alongside the scientific and, in particular, Hippocratic medical traditions, de-emphasized earlier and contemporary speculative philosophy. Herodotus' relation to these thinkers is viewed as connected to empiricism, especially in his ethnographic and geographical interests. In line with this, Dietram Müller has argued that Herodotus was the first empiricist, regarding sense perception and experience as the only valid avenues of knowledge. On this reading, Herodotus opposed the Presocratic philosophers, who either rejected or heavily qualified the value of the senses and proceeded by and large by deductive reasoning, which led to seriously flawed views on the natural world.[21] Evidence of empiricism in the *Histories* is taken from passages in which Herodotus is critical of his contemporaries, as in depictions of the map of the world that made the earth perfectly circular and surrounded by a river, Ocean, and that split Asia, Europe, and Libya into equally sized landmasses (4.36.2).[22] By contrast, Herodotus is seen as approaching his inquiries with no preconceived opinions and drawing only limited conclusions on the basis of his autopsy rather than grand deductive theories. As Thomas stresses of Herodotus: "It is particularly the ethnographical and geographical sections, or the sections dealing with questions of customs in more theoretical ways, that show the *Histories* to be part of this milieu."[23] This emphasis on empiricism has a long history in secondary scholarship on Herodotus and has been a productive line of research. However, it has often been conducted at the expense of what might be considered "non-empiricist" philosophical debates, such as those surrounding relativism, ethics, nature, and epistemology.[24] As Thomas herself has argued forcefully, we cannot distinguish the as-yet-undifferentiated fields of science and medicine from the concerns of fifth-century philosophy, and it would be surprising for this reason if Herodotus did so.[25] I suggested

[20] Thomas (2000), 162.
[21] Müller (1981). By thinking of Herodotus as an empiricist, he follows Meyer's lead (1899), 252.
[22] Müller (1981), 302–3.
[23] Thomas (2000), 271–2, In this Thomas returns to the seminal article of Nestle (1908), 37, which concludes: "Zu den philosophischen Problemen im strengen Sinn, zu den Prinzipienfragen, nimmt Herodot nirgends Stellung: insofern hat er zur Philosophie überhaupt kein inneres Verhältnis. Er nimmt von ihr nur Notiz, soweit sie in die ἱστορίη, den Kreis der Erfahrungswissenschaften, übergreift." ("Herodotus takes no position on philosophical problems in the strict sense, on fundamental questions: to that degree he has no internal relationship to philosophy at all. He takes from philosophy only notes, insofar as they overlap with *historie*, the realm of empirical science.")
[24] In fact, setting these ancient thinkers into rigid empiricist/rationalist dichotomies is anachronistic; this is a line of investigation that might be pursued in greater detail.
[25] See also van der Eijk (2008).

above that empiricism is de-emphasized by Solon in his role as internal historian, which encourages a more expansive approach to philosophical thought in the text. Additionally, if Herodotus has emerged from this invaluable research as an intellectual at home in his historical moment, nonetheless, it remains unclear how the scientific and medical context can help to determine the wider arc of his narrative of the Greco-Persian Wars, which is after all the driving theme of the work.[26]

This book is an exploration of the relationship of philosophy to early Greek historiography avant la lettre as exemplified by the *Histories*. As we shall see, Herodotus' *historie* on Greek and foreign peoples and events competed in the Presocratic marketplace of ideas in important ways. In the fifth century, philosophical ideas, like market products, competed through the agonistic display culture that characterized philosophical *apodexis*, demonstration. This oral-literary hybrid created the conditions for the quick dissemination of information and contributed to Herodotus' wide-ranging philosophical understanding.[27] After all, the sophists' wisdom was for sale, for those who could afford it.[28] Were philosophical schools the venues of such information in this period, one might expect a more dogmatic sense of philosophical influence on the *Histories*. But following the Greco-Persian Wars, the competitive debate style of exposition afforded historiography – and indeed, comedy, tragedy, and medicine – a varied set of philosophical positions to adopt, reformulate, or reject.

From the proem onward, the *Histories* displays an attunement to philosophical ideas and their historical application and is thus an important chapter in the emerging dialectic on the interactions between philosophy and literary culture.[29] Herodotus' inquiry into human history takes up the challenges posed by the intellectuals of his time and in doing so

[26] This will contrast with the marked tendency to view Herodotus' engagement with sophistic thinkers as superficial, e.g., Legrand 159–60, "et que ces enseignements aient fait sur lui une impression profonde, durable, il n'y a pas apparence …. En face de la rhétorique et de la sophistique, l'attitude d'Hérodote a été celle qui, au cours de son existence, lui fut le plus habituelle: un complaisante réceptivité." ("[T]here is no appearance that these lessons made a deep, lasting impression on him … in the face of rhetoric and the sophistic, the attitude of Herodotus was the one that was most habitual in the course of his life: a complacent receptivity.").

[27] Here I am drawing upon Thomas (1993), 230, and her reading of Herodotus' performance milieu: "these [i.e., Herodotus'] oral performances were a great deal more stimulating, even antagonistic, than scholars generally seem to envisage … there are close similarities in style and mode of argument with some of the very earliest 'essays' to be found in the disparate works collected in the Hippocratic Corpus … and contests of the early sophistic generation." See also Thomas (2000), 4.

[28] Pl. *Ap*. 19e–20a; *Prt*. 313c–e; Xen. *Mem*. 1.6.13.

[29] On comedy: Clements (2014); Holmes (2019). Tragedy: Billings (2021). Biography: Bonazzi and Schorn (2016). The novel: Morgan and Jones (2007); Futre Pinheiro and Montiglio (2015).

illustrates the untapped force of historical narrative for working through philosophical questions. Advances in philosophy are used to discuss, explore, and shape his approach to the historical past. This preoccupation with the theories prevalent among the Presocratic philosophers will contribute to the reassessment of Herodotus' inquiry as distant from non-empiricist concerns.

Of course, no single philosophical doctrine is expounded in the *Histories*, nor should the text be interpreted as part of any individual "school" of thought.[30] For this reason, this book presents a series of arguments that situate the *Histories* alongside a diverse cast of thinkers including philosophers, sophists, scientists, medical practitioners, and rhetoricians – but also tragedians and comic poets, whose central role in intellectual culture is only recently coming to be understood. Its ambition is not to assess the philosophical merit of Herodotus' arguments; instead, it aims to reconsider early Greek historiography's cultural and intellectual context, probing the consequences of its early generic indeterminacy.

The Linguistic Turn's influence on interpretations of the *Histories* has helpfully stressed Herodotus' position as a literary craftsman. Such work has increasingly drawn attention to the artfulness of the composition and to the recurrence of themes and *topoi* throughout the text.[31] In building on this research, I operate on the premise that Herodotus' *historie* does not simply transcribe philosophical debates but integrates them so as to develop a broader narrative project, which must be seen as having a structural unity. In line with this, the book considers the interaction of philosophical texts, concepts, and ideas in the narrative progression toward the Greco-Persian Wars, as the *Histories* engages with these subjects not in discrete passages alone but in broad narrative arcs. What emerges from this approach is that while the narrator is almost entirely reticent in directly quoting or otherwise referring to contemporary intellectuals, nonetheless the historical narrative throughout the *Histories* stakes out a range of philosophical views that place the reader in the hermeneutic position of vicariously testing ideas and methods in a laboratory of historical action.

These principles of narrative composition are exemplified in what is perhaps the most famous example of Herodotus' ambitions in intellectual culture, his excursus on the nature (*physis*) of the Nile River that leads it to

[30] E.g., Schwartz (1890), (1891), who connected the *Histories* to a hypothetical early, pro-Persian sophistic movement, whose exponents were otherwise lost.

[31] Beginning with Immerwahr (1956). This method was powerfully asserted by Lateiner (1984), (1986), (1989); it has notable recent exponents in Pelling (2002), (2019) and Baragwanath (2008).

flood during the summer (2.19–27).[32] It is well known that Herodotus' recognition of the three ways that Greek intellectuals have attempted to explain the phenomenon refers to the theories of Thales,[33] Hecataeus, and Anaxagoras. Of course, none of these thinkers is named. They had attributed the flooding to the Etesian winds, Ocean, and melting snow, respectively. The *Histories* airs each theory and after rejecting them in turn, Herodotus proposes his own solution to the summer flooding, but he does so by qualifying the discussion as being "about the unseen" (2.24.1: περὶ τῶν ἀφανέων). His opinion is one that he has already employed to explain Egypt's geological change: the retreat of moisture. He hypothesizes that evaporation occurs in the winter in Egypt due to the sun's irregular position in the sky during this time of year – a result of the wind. It is evaporation that keeps the Nile from overflowing each winter, as it otherwise would, and as all other rivers do. In presenting the theories of his rivals and then subsequently overturning them, the *histor* stages a sophistic debate, much as we expect they proceeded in the competitive *agones sophias*.[34] Herodotus' admission of the question's resistance to empiricism situates him within a subset of contemporary thinkers considering the use of proofs outside of the realm of direct autopsy.[35] His conclusion appears to be highly original and aspires to persuade the same audience and to accrue the same cachet as that of the fifth-century *sophistai*. But Herodotus' interest in *physis* does not stop here, nor does his willingness to respond polemically to intellectual debates surrounding it. Herodotus' discussion of the Nile's flooding is regularly interpreted in isolation, as a digression from historical memory, which constitutes the backbone of the work. As we shall see, read in light of Herodotus' discussion of *physis* elsewhere, this passage contributes to a progressive story arc for *physis* as a category of historical explanation. It is a concept that plays a role in clarifying the Hellenic victory over the Persians in the text and among Herodotus' contemporaries. This is all to say, individual

[32] Discussed at pp. 125–7.

[33] Apparently also espoused by Euthymenes of Massalia, *FGrH* 647 F 1.

[34] For a description of the persuasive force of these displays, see DK 82 B 11.13.

[35] Cf. Anonymous Florentinus *FGrH* 647 F 1 for the nature of Herodotus' contribution in line with Thales, Anaxagoras, Euripides, Aeschylus, Callisthenes, Democritus, Euthymenes of Massalia, and Oinopides of Chios. Diod. Sic. 37.1 discusses the flooding, noting: ἐπικεχειρήκασι πολλοὶ τῶν τε φιλοσόφων καὶ τῶν ἱστορικῶν ἀποδιδόναι τὰς ταύτης αἰτίας. ("Many philosophers and historians have tried to explain its causes.") DK 24 B 1 = Diog. Laert. 8.83 for Alcmaeon's preface, which similarly refers to the "unseen" and the necessity of humans to conjecture on the basis of signs.

episodes will be shown to gain in significance when placed in a broader narrative context.

Part of the difficulty of analyzing the *Histories* alongside contemporary philosophical texts rests in these fields' separation into the discrete genres of history and philosophy, which seem to operate on the basis of very different frameworks. However, this taxonomy obscures more than it reveals. The remainder of the introduction addresses the thorny question of the genre of the *Histories* and philosophical treatises through the lens of contemporary genre theory. Genre theory provides a valuable approach to texts' horizon of expectation. The *Histories*' horizon of expectation can be fruitfully investigated by a close reading of the proem. The proem will lead to a discussion of the valence of the ancient terms *historie* and *philosophia* and also to a consideration of the value of the label "Presocratic" for the philosophers writing in the period in which Herodotus was composing the *Histories*. The chapter concludes with a look at the afterlife of this relationship, to history's competition with philosophy. This phenomenon gestures to the way in which Herodotus' inquiry is productive for understanding the longue durée of ancient historiography.

A Splendid Isolation? *Historie*, History, and Philosophy

We cannot overestimate the importance of Herodotus in determining the trajectory of what will become the genre of historiography.[36] Yet in spite of an awareness of its anteriority, the *Histories* is often interpreted in light of the generic expectations of later historiography, which only arose in its wake. Perhaps most influential is the contention of Felix Jacoby, that Herodotus' project evolved from a geographical one to ethnography to the telos of historical thinking, in the genre of the war narrative.[37] But in the period in which Herodotus was writing, how would audiences have approached the text?

Genre studies provides a critical methodology for discussing the position of texts in their historical moment. Literary genres are ordered sets of discursive properties arising from speech acts. Through repetition, these discursive properties create mental frameworks, or horizons of expectation, on what to anticipate from a text. Encoding texts into patterns determines,

[36] For studies of the historians and genre, Marincola (1999); Pelling (1999); Darbo-Peschanski (2007), 335–426; Naddaf (2012); Kraus (2013); Thomas (2019), 19–21. For the theory of genre in antiquity, exemplary is Farrell (2003).

[37] Jacoby (1913). For a short, lucid treatment of Jacoby's position on Herodotus, Luraghi (2001a), 5–8.

in large part, how audiences interpret literary products. All audiences read for genre, whether consciously or not.[38] Indeed, genre is at heart a reader-response activity. It places the audience in the position of imputing a template to a text, a template that inevitably shifts and evolves in the process of moving through a narrative.[39] The audience's projection of a text's horizon of expectation will dictate the way in which they interpret it as a whole.[40] This is not to suggest that any prose genres were rigid and inflexible. The experimentation found in such texts in the fifth century in particular counters this possibility. Chris Pelling has rightly observed, "we do better to think of 'on-the-whole' expectations . . .. Many classical texts will have worked by revising readers' expectations as they go, continually constructing their own 'genre.'"[41] Audiences were prepared for encountering existing generic frameworks as well as innovation within them.

How, then, does a new genre, such as historiography, come into being? New genres emerge out of existing genres, morphing "by inversion, by displacement, by combination."[42] Carolyn Miller has argued that two metaphors – evolution and emergence – predominate in the scholarly discussion of innovation and genre; she maintains that these metaphors offer differing conceptions of the phenomenon.[43] Emergence highlights the innovative nature of the new genre, which arrives in its field with little obvious precedent. It will have genetic relationships with existing genres, but this is less relevant than its appearance as novel in relation to them. These genres are seen as underdetermined. Alternatively, evolution implies change over time, with an emphasis on the modification of existing genres in the production of new ones. Variants eventually produce a new product. The first metaphor stresses a perceived radical break, the second, continuity. Miller determines that emergence-based models serve to highlight the experience of novelty that a new work can provoke.[44] When a culture identifies a work as constituting a new genre, this serves to satisfy a

[38] I am less concerned with the awareness of the ancients of "genre"; for a negative assessment, see Rosenmeyer (1985), 81–2. Whitmarsh (2005), has contended persuasively that in spite of the absence of a specific term for the "novel" in antiquity, audiences nonetheless interpret it as a genre.

[39] Frow (2005), 109–11. With Kraus (2013), 420, "monitoring the implicit, ongoing dialogue between writer and audience/reader, seeing a literary type working through challenge or confirmation of expectation in matters of form and content, continues to be a productive way of understanding ancient prose genre."

[40] Frow (2005), 116, writes on the "contract" of the work and the set of expectations that it gives rise to, calling these "metacommunications" (115) that the reader uses as orientation. See also Aurell (2015) and Munslow (2015) on genre and history broadly conceived.

[41] Pelling (2007), 80. Frameworks should not be considered "rules," e.g., Pelling (1999), 329.

[42] Todorov (1976), 161. [43] Miller (2016), (2017). [44] Miller (2016), 15.

function in a given community rather than having any essentializing-objective reality. A work's perception as fully distinctive has to be considered in line with the role that it plays in the context of related genres. Evolution, meanwhile, provides an explanation for innovation that is alert to interrelation. It blurs categories; at the same time, it assesses departures from normative elements in a given genre.

Scholars considering the genre of the *Histories* have often pointed to the uniqueness of the text.[45] This conclusion relies upon separating the project from contemporary and antecedent literary products and interpreting the dearth of prose texts surviving from the fifth century as evidence in favor of Herodotus' distinctiveness. At heart, it is an emergence-based approach, which presumes that the *Histories* exceeds its predecessors in creating a radically unique generic product. Emergence-based accounts rely upon the cultural response provoked by genres conceived of as new. Is there, then, a basis for this modern conclusion if we turn to the reception of Herodotus in antiquity? Given the absence of an overt critical discussion of the *Histories* in the fifth century, we can instead assess the meta-discourse of historiography as a genre. It is striking that Herodotus almost never plays a role in the genre's origin story. The seventh-century cataloger Isidore of Seville awards the title of first "pagan historian" to Dares the Phrygian, apparent eyewitness to the war between the Greeks and the Trojans. Herodotus is said to be the second historian after Dares but the first in Greece.[46] In any case, the comment leads to the long tradition of interpreting Dares the Phrygian as the first historian. Another "first-hand" history of the Trojan War was said to have been written by the Cretan Dictys (*FGrH* 49), though he is not included in critical discussion of the origins of historiography. The tenth-century CE Byzantine encyclopaedia,

[45] As Momigliano famously put it (1958), 3: "There was no Herodotus before Herodotus." Rather than suggesting that no predecessor existed before Herodotus, Momigliano more modestly offers that no prior writer "did the work for him" of exploring the East and the Persian Wars and writing this down. Lateiner (1989), 13, begins his monograph with the revealing chapter 1 title, "A New Genre, a New Rhetoric"; on his interpretation, Herodotus' generic model is not followed by his successors in historiography. See also Evans (1991), 42; Boedeker (2000), 114. Kurke (2011), 367, well discusses the emphasis on the *Histories*' status as a new genre in the context of Herodotus' choice of prose.

[46] Isid. *Etym.* 1.42. Racine (2016), 203–4, discusses the passage but finds that "Late Antiquity also saw the displacement of Herodotus as the 'Father of History' by older or more authoritative writers." In fact, Herodotus' status as "Father" was never settled in antiquity. Momigliano (1958), 13, in thinking about Herodotus as the father of anthropology, sociology, and folklore, rightly points out that "it is a strange truth that Herodotus has really become the father of history only in modern times." For a thoughtful discussion of ancient criticism on Herodotean and Thucydidean historiography, see Rood (2020), 30–5.

the *Suda*, reports that Acusilaus was the oldest historian (ἱστορικὸς πρεσβύτατος).[47] In discussing Hecataeus of Miletus, the *Suda* reveals an alternative tradition, stating that Acusilaus' work is spurious and that in fact Hecataeus produced the first work of history in prose (πρῶτος δὲ ἱστορίαν πεζῶς ἐξήνεγκε).[48] Elsewhere, the *Suda* records that some consider Pherecydes of Syros the first author of a history in prose, while others think it is Cadmus of Miletus.[49] Pliny the Elder, at least, held that Cadmus introduced the writing of history (7.205). More critical is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who observed that the first historians are bare names and that even those apparently early historians with surviving texts, such as Cadmus of Miletus and Aristaeus of Proconnesus, are not unanimously accepted as genuine.[50] Nonetheless, prior to Thucydides, Dionysius can name around a dozen historians outside of (and largely earlier than) Herodotus, with the proviso that there were many others (5). The third-century CE Latin grammarian, Solinus, awarded the Ionians the palm for founding history, beginning with Xanthus of Lydia.[51] Cicero is in fact a rather lone voice in his famous statement that Herodotus is the "Father of history" (*De leg.* 1.5). But in *On the Orator*, he writes that Herodotus "adorned" (*ornavit*) the genre first, listing Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Acusilaus as the originators of Greek historiography.[52] This is in line with Greek literary criticism's position on history's stylistic evolution via

[47] For Acusilaus as a "historian," *FGrH* 2 TT 1–3, 5.

[48] *FGrH* 1 T 1. The complexity of distinguishing history and epic is evident in the willingness of Strabo 1.2.6 to call the works of Cadmus, Pherecydes, and Hecataeus poetic in content excepting their use of prose. Cf. Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.26.7 who attributes prose translations of Hesiod to the "historians" Eumelus and Acusilaus, who then pass it off as their own work. Designations of *historia* as being first written in *prose* by these figures point to the essentializing interpretation of the genre of historiography in antiquity. For an explicit statement, Plut. *E ap. Delph.* 406e, where history shakes off ornate verse for staid prose in the fifth century BCE, at a time when Lacedaemonian simplicity came in vogue; e.g., Th. 1.6, a synchronism that might suggest an interpretation of *Thucydides* as the founder of historiography.

[49] *FGrH* 3 T 1. Cf. *FGrH* 489 T 1b.

[50] Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 23. The latter in particular is a distinctive inclusion in the history of historiography, as he was, according to Herodotus, the author of the verse poem, the *Arimaspeia*. At *FGrH* 35 T1, he is a writer of *epos* that is also *historia*. Verse does not necessarily exclude historiography, as is clear from the second-century BCE history of Apollodorus of Athens, whose *Chronika* was in iambic trimeter and recorded the events of individual lives on the basis of the chronology of Eratosthenes, *FGrH* 244 T1; according to Strabo, he also wrote a *Ges periodos* in the same meter, *FGrH* 244 T 16 = Strab. 14.5.22. Arist. *Po.* 1451b affirms the same principle: εἴη γὰρ ἂν τὰ Ἡροδότου εἰς μέτρα τεθῆναι καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον ἂν εἴη ἱστορία τις μετὰ μέτρου ἢ ἄνευ μέτρων.

[51] *BNJ* 765 T3; after the placement of Xanthus before Hecataeus, the list proceeds chronologically with Herodotus, among others. See also a description of Herodotus, Hdn. 3.1.359 (Lentz) = St. Byz. (s.v. Θούριοι) = Page (1981), anon. CLIV: Ἰάδος ἀρχαίης ἱστορίης πρύτανιν ("lord of ancient Ionian history"), discussed in Priestley (2014), 29–34.

[52] Cic. *de Or.* 2.55. See also Fox (2007), 136–7.

Herodotus. This meta-discourse on the genre of history shows that while Herodotus could be interpreted in antiquity as a distinctive figure in the history of historiography, he was not its "founder." In nearly each case, he is seen as part of a wider tradition of prose authors writing historical narrative. There are important ideological forces that shaped this anachronistic understanding of Herodotus' *Histories* as another in a long line of historical narratives, but for our purposes it is sufficient to show that the meta-discursive reflection does not historicize the *Histories*' unique generic position in its fifth-century milieu.[53] This is as far as an emergence-based account can take us.

Evolutionary theories of new genres, by contrast, move away from the reception of texts and center on their relationships – identities and departures – within a literary community.[54] As Miller puts it:

> If we are concerned to explain how innovation happens, under the presupposition that stability and continuity constitute the default condition, then evolution can help conceptualize the processes and mechanisms by which variations come about and are replicated and propagated. (2016), 16

Because "new" genres emerge out of existing ones, it is possible to chart generic affinities on the basis of expectations that texts generate internally, even in the absence of meta-discursive commentary. As the following discussion will argue, the *Histories* provokes strong audience expectations as early as the proem.

The proem begins with a self-description as an exhibition of *historie*, "inquiry."[55] *Historie* comes to refer to the genre of historiography but only in the fourth century BCE and even then not exclusively. What, then, would the audience of the last third of the fifth century have associated this term with?[56] Around 500 BCE, the philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus had described the activity of Pythagoras as follows: "Pythagoras, son of

[53] For the proposal that it is only in the Hellenistic period that prose is divided into the spheres of philosophy, history, and oratory, Sluiter (2000). The classic treatment of genre and the *Histories* is Boedeker (2000), who looks to what the narrator states explicitly in relation to competitors as generic individuation. A potential danger in this approach is that polemic may equally signal generic affiliation.

[54] See a variation on this formulation applied by Michalowski (1999), 89, "generic qualities were essential properties . . . that surfaced in the way in which texts spoke to each other." For alternatives to evolutionary metaphors for multigenre texts, see Wells (2014).

[55] For analysis of these terms, consult the excellent treatment of Bakker (2002), *passim*.

[56] Thomas (2000), 165, aligns it with "scientific activity," as "denoting the attempt to find out the truth about the world without resorting to divine or supernatural explanations." While my conclusions differ from their own, the term is well treated by Darbo-Peschanski (2007) and Naddaf (2012).

Mnesarchus, became proficient in investigation (ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν) more than all other men, and after he had made a selection of these writings he made his own wisdom, excessive learning (πολυμαθίην), false artifice."[57] The fragment is frustratingly terse. Nonetheless, it is clear that the intellectual labor of Pythagoras could be identified as an activity of "inquiry" and that Heraclitus believed this took the form of searching out prose treatises. Heraclitus is sometimes thought to denigrate this methodology of practicing *historie*, as Pythagoras' florilegium is characterized so negatively.[58] This may be right, or it may be that Pythagoras made a promising start only to falter.[59] In any case, it is clear that *historie* could fall within the realm of philosophical activity.

In a lost tragedy, Herodotus' contemporary, Euripides, idealizes *historia* as the activity of the virtuous citizen in the following terms:

> Happy is the man who | has acquired an understanding of inquiry (ὄλβιος ὅστις τῆς ἱστορίας | ἔσχε μάθησιν) | without setting out to harm other citizens | or to carry out unjust deeds, | but observing the ageless order of | immortal nature, where it was formed, | for what reason, and how (ἀλλ' ἀθανάτου καθορῶν φύσεως | κόσμον ἀγήρων, πῇ τε συνέστη | καὶ ὅπῃ καὶ ὅπως). | Never does an interest in shameful | deeds come near to such men. (DK 59 A 30 = *TrGF* F 910 Kannicht)

As for Heraclitus, Euripides' *historia* is an intellectual process associated with philosophical knowledge.[60] The formula of praise connects human well-being (ὄλβιος) to education in inquiry, in what is perhaps a nod to Anaxagoras' theories on human happiness.[61] The citizen practicing *historia* is opposed to those harmful features of civic participation, hostility, and

[57] DK 22 B 129 = Diog. Laert. 8.6. The fragment is recognized as authentic in spite of Diels' (1890), 451, suggestion that it was a forgery on the basis of its reference to early written texts. See Huffman (2008) for an analysis of it with reference to Herodotus' use of the term. For common features of thought in Heraclitus and Herodotus, see Walter (2017).

[58] At B 40, Heraclitus criticizes Pythagoras (along with Hesiod, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus) for polymathy, or "excessive learning" (πολυμαθίη), contrasting it with νόος, "good sense." This generalization may at first point to a critique of method more than execution. However, inquiry into many things is positively characterized at B 3: χρὴ γὰρ εὖ μάλα πολλῶν ἴστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι ("For it is necessary for men who are lovers of wisdom to be inquirers into quite a lot of things"), which may suggest that Heraclitus finds fault with their approach to wide learning.

[59] Marcovich (2001), 69. For an alternative reading (and a persuasive argument for the authenticity of B 35), see Moore (2019), 37–65.

[60] For this passage, see McDonald (1978), 29–30 n. 56; Collard, Cropp, and Gibert (2004), 324–5; and Bernardini (2016), connecting the fragment to sentiments in Hesiod and Pindar and as an attempt by Euripides to out-sophist the sophists. Kannicht ad loc. notes that *historia* is only used here in Greek tragedy.

[61] See Valckenaer (1767), 28–30; included as DK 59 A 30.

injustice. The unknown *persona loquens* of the fragment links inquiry to the contemplation of the immortal nature of the world order, which is likely to be associated with the observation of the heavens. Explaining the location, direction, and origin of this eternal order are the activities of inquiry, and they are ethically determined inasmuch as they lead to virtuous civic behavior.

Another roughly contemporary reference to this terminology can be found in the fifth-century Hippocratic *On Ancient Medicine* (20.1–3). This anonymous text includes the language of *historia* in a critique of the physicians and philosophers (*sophistai*), who argue that one must understand what a man is before undertaking the art of medicine.[62] The author maintains that this is the sphere of those like Empedocles who have written on what a man is, his origin, and his composition. He then reverses the order of knowledge, stating that those interested in philosophy must begin from the art of medicine "to know accurately this information (τὴν ἱστορίην ταύτην) about what man is, through what causes he arose, and the rest" (20.2).[63] The nod to Empedocles and those writing "on nature" is again evocative of the association of *historia* with philosophical intellectual research. Inquiry is a totalizing process of understanding the human for the doctor, which includes in it the knowledge of the definition of man, his genesis, and his elemental makeup. The final fifth-century reference occurs in the latter part of the century in the Hippocratic *On the Art of Medicine*, in which the physician inveighs against sophists who criticize the art of medicine without contributing any new knowledge to it.[64] Such thinkers are accused of "making a display of their own inquiry" (1: ἱστορίης οἰκείης ἐπίδειξιν, Littré), language reminiscent of Herodotus' exposition of inquiry (ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις).[65] In contrast to Herodotus, the medical practitioner criticizes this kind of display of knowledge as unproductive. The evidence suggests that *historia* embraces a wide range of sensory activity in research.[66] By the early fourth century BCE, Plato's Socrates confirms this

[62] Schiefsky (2005), 63, dates *VM* to the last quarter of the fifth century.

[63] Schiefsky (2005), 311, refers to it as "science: ἱστορίη can mean both inquiry and the body of knowledge that results from inquiry, i.e. a 'science.' Here it refers to the kind of knowledge of human φύσις that the author associates with Empedocles."

[64] Hippoc. *de Arte* 1. Mann (2012), 40, postulates that the attack is against Protagoras.

[65] Noted by Thomas (2000), 251, 262, "*apodeixis* can hover somewhere between the idea of demonstration or proof . . . and display"; Bakker (2002), 20–22, gives a very persuasive analysis of the term as distinct from *epideixis*.

[66] With Thomas (2000), 167, where *historie* is empirical and theoretical. I agree with Schepens (2007), 40, that it includes "seeing, questioning, judging, or hearing." By contrast, Bakker (2002) has argued that *historie* has its roots in researched-based autopsy and that Herodotus adapts this.

hypothesis, in a discussion of his youthful interest in the kind of philosophy that his predecessors had practiced. Socrates explains that he desired "this wisdom (ταύτης τῆς σοφίας) which they call the inquiry on nature (περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίαν)."[67] He clarifies that this is the wisdom to know the causes of each thing and why they happen; it includes an inquiry into the things in the heavens and on the earth, the origin and dissolution of things, and why they exist. More specifically, young Socrates ponders the nourishment and death of humans; the elemental composition of thought; and the origins of the senses, memory, opinion, and knowledge.[68] Meanwhile, Alcidamas, Plato's contemporary, critiques the failed philosopher as one who neglects inquiry, ἱστορίας (*historias*), as well as education and skill in speaking (F 1.1 Avezzù). Inquiry, then, is closely linked in the fifth century with philosophical intellectual culture; in fact, this connection persists in the fourth century as well. It is a praxis that draws the intellectual toward wisdom.

Thomas has thoughtfully discussed the *Histories* in relation to some of the passages noted above and concluded that they signal that Herodotus' work "belonged in the world of scientific enquiry, whether it be into nature, or the nature of man, or as in Herodotus, the nature of the conflict between the Greeks and barbarians in the widest possible interpretation of that conflict."[69] This points in the right direction. By considering the *Histories* in light of the horizon of expectations that it constructs, it is possible to go further. Generic self-definition relies upon existing communicative parameters to guide readers. Contemporary audiences encountering the experimental prose work that is the *Histories* would have attempted to place it within a network of corresponding literary systems to make sense of it. While the work will exceed, in many respects, contemporary philosophical literary products, at the same time readers of the *Histories* would have made sense of its appeal to *historie* in terms of contemporary philosophical texts, if its uses elsewhere are any indication. The general theme of human warfare and its causes places the audience in the position of identifying and contrasting the project with its partners in

[67] Pl. *Phd*. 96a.

[68] For additional uses in the fourth century: Pl. *Cra*. 437b; Pl. *Phdr*. 244c. In 350, Isoc. *Ep*. 8.4, he requests that the Mytilenean oligarchs permit the return of Agenor (and his brothers) on the basis of the former's prevailing "in the knowledge of this art" (περὶ τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς παιδείας ταύτης), in this case, of music. In 339, Isoc. *Panath*. 246, he states that his work is full of "information (ἱστορίας) and *philosophia*," in a further connection of the terms.

[69] Thomas (2000), 167 and at 212, "Perhaps what we are seeing in the *Histories* too is that while the 'genre' of *historie* is still exceptionally wide, indeed not really a genre at all, certain subjects are indeed beginning to attract particular methods and language."

contemporary intellectual culture.[70] That is, the *Histories* does not create its audience ex nihilo, it relies upon readerly competence to do the work of situating its literary ambitions in an already-existing reading culture. This is not to suggest that the *Histories* is solely in dialogue with philosophy but that it is a key point of reference.[71]

The mental framework evoked by the proem's reference to a display of "inquiry" continues in its statement that it does so "in order that the things brought about by mankind (τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων) not fade with time, nor that the deeds great and marvellous (ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά), some realized by Greeks and others by non-Greeks, not be without fame" (1.p). It may be objected that the *Histories*' ambitious scope of human events and deeds exhibits a breadth of inquiry that exceeds the more restricted ambit of philosophical treatises. After all, the range of the project led Diodorus Siculus to father the first universal history on Herodotus:[72]

> Of the historians, Herodotus, beginning from the period before the Trojan War, wrote of the common actions of just about the entire inhabited world (γέγραφε κοινὰς σχεδόν τι τὰς τῆς οἰκουμένης πράξεις) in nine books, and he brings his composition to an end with the Greeks against the Persians at the battle at Mycale and the siege of Sestus. (11.37.6)

Diodorus' identification of Herodotus as a universal historian was not adopted, so far as we know, by other ancient readers, but it does indicate the work's astonishing chronological, geographical, and thematic breadth.[73] In the proem, the *Histories* advertises itself as a universalizing

[70] My understanding of genre and historiography has been influenced by Phillips (2000). We might also consider that the *Histories* is generically signaling the medical tradition, but this is harder to square with these treatises' tendency to set *historia* against their own self-definition in the fifth- and early fourth-century texts.

[71] Both philosophers and Herodotus' target is often Homeric epic, for which, see Burkert (1999), 104, "The so-called Presocratics were still embedded in the older traditions and were using them, at least as a kind of 'scaffolding'; their constructs were helped, though sometimes also somewhat twisted, by this pre-existing scaffolding." For the commonalities in fifth-century historiography and poetry, see Scardino (2007), 33–5.

[72] Cf. comments on Herodotus' universal project by Fornara (1983), 32; Immerwahr (1966), 16, 19, 149. For a different reading, see Alonso-Núñez (2003), 151. Whether Herodotus was the first to write "universal history" or not is not materially important, but on this see Fowler (2001), 97, who contends that Hellanicus' chronographic compilation, *Priestesses of Hera*, had a similarly universal aim.

[73] Cf. Jacoby (1913), 352–60, where Herodotus is thought to create world historiography via his exposure to Athens. Van Wees (2002), 321, finds it intended as "a universal history of the human race." He cites additional bibliography at n. 1. See Fowler (2006), 31–2, on the encyclopaedic nature of the *Histories*.

compilation of the Greek and non-Greek past, and this pledge is kept in the course of the narrative. Interestingly, the extant historians following Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, appear to reject his expansive compass and restrict the field of inquiry to a much more circumscribed temporal and geographic orbit.[74] From the proem onward, the discursive universalism of the *Histories* is a distinctive part of its generic footprint.

This totalizing program is reinforced at the conclusion of the accounts of the learned Persians and Phoenicians on the origins of the conflict. Herodotus distances himself from these reports and instead advances the figure that he "knows" to have been the first to commit injustice against the Greeks, Croesus (1.5.3).[75] It is an identification that he forecasts will lead to a discussion of small and great cities of men due to their reversals in the span of distant and more recent history, in an observation that spurs the famous pronouncement on the cycle of prosperity and decline:[76] "So I will make mention of both alike, knowing as I do that human well-being (τὴν ἀνθρωπηίην ὦν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην) in no way remains in the same place" (1.5.4). Cities and their cycles are ultimately highways back to the human subject.[77] The student of this inquiry will acquire knowledge of the growth of human prosperity and its inevitable entropy. As it will in the Solon-Croesus interview, here too awareness of the distant past creates a unique kind of knowledge about human well-being.

The ambitious scope of the *Histories* has a parallel in sixth- and fifth-century philosophy. Tony Long has persuasively argued that the early Greek philosophers are united in their research into "all things." Their "project is not to talk about or explain literally everything, but rather to give a universalist account, to show what the 'all' or the universe is like, to take everything – the world as a whole – as the subject of inquiry."[78]

[74] Contrast too the more local ambit of the contemporaneous *Foundation of Chios* by Ion of Chios, *FGrH* 392.

[75] For discussions of knowledge, see pp. 168–89, 217–20.

[76] The notion that a city's prosperity would grow and then decay mirrors the ubiquitous concern among philosophers on the cyclical nature of things, e.g., DK 31 B 26: ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπλομένοιο κύκλοιο, | καὶ φθίνει εἰς ἄλληλα καὶ αὔξεται ἐν μέρει αἴσης. ("And they rule in turn as the circle revolves, | waning and increasing into one another in their fated turn.") It has been suggested that Herodotus' emphasis on this is an expansion of Heraclitean thought, e.g., Walter (2017), 159–60.

[77] The adjective ἀνθρωπηίος is used in key passages in Book 1: by Solon at 1.32.1 in response to Croesus' complaint that his *eudaimonie* is being discounted; at 1.207.2, Croesus himself uses it in his admonition that Cyrus learn the "cycle of human affairs" (κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπηίων … πρηγμάτων) that keep the same men from prospering; and at 1.214.4 Tomyris fills up a sack with human blood to sate the decapitated head of Cyrus.

[78] Long (1999), 10. See too Laks (2018), 3–4.

Distinctive to early Greek philosophy is its attempt to produce a discourse on all things, an extensive body of knowledge. Xenophanes promises to speak "about all things" (DK 21 B 34); Empedocles will address how "all the things" became visible, how the four elements hold "all things" (DK 31 B 38) and in one programmatic statement rhetorically asks "who would boast that he has found the whole (τὸ δ' ὅλον)?" (Laks-Most D 42); meanwhile, Heraclitus polemically states that "all things happen" in accordance with his *logos* (DK 22 B 1) and that "all things come about by strife and necessity" (B 80); Anaxagoras begins his book by stating that "all things were together" (DK 59 B 1), before describing the totality's properties; Ion of Chios starts his philosophical treatise by contending that "all things are three" (*FGrH* 392 F 24a);[79] and after Diogenes of Apollonia's proem, the philosopher proposes that "all things are differentiated out of the same thing and are the same thing" (DK 64 B 2).

This universalizing program is confirmed by the kinds of research undertaken by the early Greek philosophical thinkers, research that includes theology, cosmology, and cosmogony, as well as epistemological, political, and ethical thought. From Anaximander onward, philosophers wrote accounts of the universe's order: on the generation and composition of the cosmos (and at times, its destruction), celestial bodies, meteorology, the generation of humans and animals, the principles of sensation and cognition, and the origins of the social contract. Heraclitus' *On Nature*, for example, was said to be divided into three tracts – one on the universe, one on politics, and another on the divine (A 1).[80] His fragments demonstrate this multi-disciplinarity. In one, he complains about the excessive learning of Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus, whose education, Heraclitus says, failed to result in intelligence.[81] Without additional context it is difficult to be sure what attracted Heraclitus' criticism. In any case, by including Hecataeus in his critique, in addition to the more familiar philosophical figures of Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes, Heraclitus points to the inclusion of mythography, ethnography, and geography in the sphere of philosophical intellectual culture already in

[79] For a treatment of the philosophical content of the *Triagmos*, Baltussen (2007).

[80] His extant fragments include reflections on, for example, epistemology, sense perception, flux, the cycle of opposites, cosmic fire, the sun, moon, stars, eclipses, meteorology, and the human.

[81] B 40 = Diog. Laert. 5.9.3: πολυμαθίη νόον οὐ διδάσκει· Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην αὖτίς τε Χενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἑκαταῖον.

the first half of the fifth century.[82] His own philosophy aims to repudiate and supplant the work of these thinkers.

Herodotus' contemporary, the sophist Hippias of Elis, similarly displays this totalizing research trend toward the latter part of the fifth century in what is thought to be the incipit of his provocative and genre-bending *Collection* (*Synagoge*).[83]

> τούτων ἴσως εἴρηται τὰ μὲν Ὀρφεῖ, τὰ δὲ Μουσαίῳ κατὰ βραχὺ ἄλλῳ ἀλλαχοῦ, τὰ δὲ Ἡσιόδῳ, τὰ δὲ Ὁμήρῳ, τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις τῶν ποιητῶν, τὰ δὲ ἐν συγγραφαῖς, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι, τὰ δὲ βαρβάροις· ἐγὼ δὲ ἐκ πάντων τούτων τὰ μέγιστα καὶ ὁμόφυλα συνθεὶς τοῦτον καινὸν καὶ πολυειδῆ τὸν λόγον ποιήσομαι. (*FGrH* 6 F 4 = DK 86 B 6)
>
> Of these, perhaps some have been said by Orpheus, others by Mousaeus, briefly, here and there, and others by Hesiod, Homer, and by other poets and those writing in prose, some by Greeks and others by non-Greeks. I, placing together the greatest and those akin to one another out of all of these, will fashion this novel and multiform *logos*.

In its promise to include the work of these early Greek poets in addition to other poets and prose writers, including non-Greeks, the *Collection* advertises itself as an encyclopaedic compilation of knowledge. Like the *Histories*, a selectivity principle is "greatness," yet novelty too is thematized, as Hippias builds a wisdom tradition in a manner that may be evocative of later doxography. Unfortunately, the contents of the *Collection* have been almost entirely lost.[84] We do know that it discussed, for example, the wisdom of the famed Milesian beauty, Thargelia – a woman who Aspasia was said to pattern herself upon – Thargelia was known for "commanding cities and rulers" and for bringing a number of Greek poleis to terms with the Persian king Xerxes during his invasion.[85]

[82] Cf. Long (1999), 9–10; Nightingale (2001), 30, "We find excellent evidence of the absence of disciplinary distinctions in the work of Heraclitus," citing this fragment. With Andolfi (2017), 198, on the genre of mythography, "there is no point in separating authors who wrote genealogies, cosmologies and *periegeseis* – they were all questioning the exactness of the frame inherited from the epic tradition." This kind of lavish inclusivity is mirrored in Strabo's contention at 1.1.1 and 1.1.11 that Hecataeus is a philosopher, as a geographer in the tradition of Anaximander and Homer.

[83] For the work, see Snell (1976 [1944]), 119–28; Dupréel (1948); Untersteiner (1954); Guthrie (1969); Patzer (1986); Kerferd (1981), 48–9.

[84] Commenting at *BNJ* 6 F 4 = Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.15.1–2, Węcowski assumes that it "treated a broad variety of subjects, including those of antiquarian character." I am not persuaded we have any idea of its organization or that we can draw firm conclusions about the content it included or excluded, in spite of the creative attempts of scholars, *pace* Snell (1976 [1944]), 486–90.

[85] Plut. *Per.* 24.3–4. Evidently a figure popular with the sophists, cf. the speech by Aeschines the Socratic on her, discussed at F 21 (Dittmar); she is Thargelia the Milesian "wise woman" (σοφή) at

The totalizing research of the philosophers is neatly encapsulated in the biographical portrait of Hippias that survives.[86] The sources point to his virtuoso ability to compose epic verse, dithyramb, tragedy, and elegy, as well as prose of all kinds (A 12). In addition to the *Collection*, we know of his *Names of Ethne* and a systematization of Greek chronology in the *Catalogue of Olympic Winners*. In Plato's *Greater Hippias*, Socrates inquires what kind of discourses Hippias performs during his visits to Sparta. After amusingly describing Sparta's distaste for lectures on cosmology, mathematics, grammar, and music theory, all of which Hippias is fully capable of delivering, he informs Socrates that they particularly enjoy speeches "on the generations of heroes and men and of the founding of cities in antiquity, and all ancient *logoi* (ἀρχαιολογίας) altogether they listen to most favourably."[87] In addition to the familiar philosophical meditations on the heavens, geometry, and rhetoric, it is significant that the sophist included chronology, genealogy, and ancient history in his research program. Beyond these speeches in Sparta and the publication of the *Collection*, this is substantiated by Hippias' apparent decision to respond to Hellanicus' chronological catalog, the *Priestesses of Hera in Argos*, with his own catalog based on the Olympiad. What this indicates is that the universalizing tendencies of early Greek philosophy could and did include the study of the past in its project.[88]

In speaking of the early Greek philosophical inquiry into nature, André Laks has affirmed the importance of discursive universality but has also stressed the study of origins as equally characteristic of the Presocratics: "On the one hand, it is directed toward a totality . . . on the other hand, it adopts a resolutely genetic perspective (it explains the existing conditions of things by tracing the history of its development from the *origins*)."[89] We have already seen that the *Histories* promises a totalizing historical

Ath. 2.2 p. 121 (Peppink); at Luc. *Eun.* 7 she is included in the ranks of female philosophers; Hsch. s.v. Θαργηλία.

[86] Comparable generic versatility is evident in Ion of Chios, who was himself recorded as writing tragedy, comedy, lyric, dithyramb, foundation narratives, memoirs, cosmology, and the virtuoso *Epidemiae*, *FGrH* 392 T 1, T 2, T 3. For a discussion of genre and Ion, see Pelling (2007), 77–83, 87–8, and in particular, 79, "What requires comment in the fifth century is not generic range, but generic narrowing."

[87] DK 86 A 11 = Pl. *Hp. mai.* 285d.

[88] The sophists' literary experimentation is well known. Protagoras' interests are wide-ranging, much as Hippias'. Cf. the list of his books preserved by Diog. Laert. 9.55 = DK 80 A 1. At B 8 = Pl. *Soph.* 232d–e, it is said that in his famed treatise, *Kataballontes*, he taught the student how to "overthrow" all the artisans. That Protagoras wrote on more than rhetoric and language is also evident from descriptions and fragments of his *Truth* and *On the Gods*.

[89] Laks (2018), 4.

undertaking. What of the second element Laks discusses, the inclination to assess cause? For this, we can start by looking to the final line of Herodotus' preface, which turns away from the general to the specific reasons for immortalizing the Greek and non-Greek past: "and in particular that the reason they warred against one another (not be without fame)" (1.p καὶ <δὴ καὶ> δι' ἣν αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν ἀλλήλοισι).[90] This summation further clarifies the scope of the inquiry by pointing to its interest in genetic analysis. It looks to the origin of the war and to the attribution of blame as its cause. If we turn to the early Greek philosophical corpus for context, it must be admitted that the terms αἰτία (*aitia*), αἴτιος (*aitios*), and πρόφασις (*prophasis*) are in fact quite rare. But a contemporary of Herodotus', Gorgias, in his rhetorical treatise the *Encomium of Helen*, lays out the plan of his speech by stating, "I will advance to the beginning of the coming argument, and I will set out the causes on account of which it was likely (προθήσομαι τὰς αἰτίας, δι' ἃς εἰκὸς) that Helen's expedition to Troy occurred" (DK 82 B 11.5).[91] Herodotus' younger contemporary, Democritus, apparently stated that "the cause (αἰτίη) of error is ignorance of what is better" (DK 68 B 83). Elsewhere he is reported to have preferred to "discover one causal explanation (αἰτιολογίαν) rather than become the king of the Persians" (B 118).[92] As we saw above, the author of *On Ancient Medicine* aimed to demarcate the art of medicine as distinct and did so by separating the questions of those "like Empedocles," who inquire into "what a man is from the beginning, and how he first came about, and from where he was constructed" (20: ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὅ τί ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ὅπως ἐγένετο πρῶτον καὶ ὁπόθεν συνεπάγη). The doctor clarifies that it is impossible to know "this *historie* on what a man is and through what causes he arose" (δι' οἵας αἰτίας γίνεται) until the art of medicine has been perfected.[93] In the extant fragments, Empedocles himself never uses the term αἰτία, but he is rightly interpreted as being interested in the project of origins and causes even so. So too Protagoras and Pericles apparently spent an entire day discussing the death of Epitimus of Pharsalus, who had been struck by a javelin in a pentathlon. Their conversation centered on the one who was more responsible (μᾶλλον . . . αἰτίους) for his death – the javelin,

[90] For causation in Herodotus, consult now above all Pelling (2019). See additionally Immerwahr (1956); Harrison (2003); Pelling (2018).

[91] For Gorgias' language of agency and responsibility, Hankinson (2001), 74–6.

[92] Cf. DK 68 A 17.

[93] Cf. *Dissoi Logoi* DK 90 8.1, where the same man should be capable of many skills including teaching "about the nature of all things, how they are and came about" (περὶ φύσιος τῶν ἁπάντων ὥς τε ἔχει καὶ ὡς ἐγένετο).

the man who threw it, or the presiders over the contest (DK 80 A 10). The more common language found in the Presocratics is ἀρχή (*arche*), "beginning" or "origin."[94] The learned Persians, according to Herodotus, explain the "beginning" (τὴν ἀρχὴν) of the enmity as arising from the Greek sack of Troy (1.5.1).[95]

In the period before and after Herodotus wrote, memorializing the Greco-Persian Wars fell largely within the province of poetic composition.[96] Indeed, its best attested thematic relatives are in epigram,[97] Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus* and *Phoenician Women*, Aeschylus' *Persians*, Simonides' elegiac poetry, and shortly after Herodotus, Timotheus of Miletus' *Persai* and Choerilus of Samos' epic *Persika*.[98] In light of this, beyond the rhetoric of the preface that we examined above, the *Histories*' medium of Ionic prose also indicates its position in the field of contemporary literature.[99] It is true that Xenophanes, Parmenides, and, later, Empedocles composed philosophy in verse, but this practice virtually disappears with them. From Anaxagoras onward, the default medium of philosophy is prose. Even Parmenides' intellectual successors, Melissus and Zeno, continued his project in prose. If it is correct to see the shadowy works of Anaximander and Anaximenes as prose works in addition to the known prose of Pherecydes and later, Heraclitus, then these mid-fifth-

[94] For example, Xenophanes DK 21 B 9, 16; Anaxagoras DK 59 B 6, 12; Alcmaeon DK 24 B 2; Antiphon DK 87 B 60, 61; Philolaus DK 44 B 2, B 4, B 6, B 13.

[95] For war and causation, see *Anon. Iambl.* at DK 7.5, 7.10, 7.12.

[96] For historiography's debt to elegy, see Bowie (2001), (2010). The most obvious precedent of memorializing a great war comes from the *Iliad*; for Homer and Herodotus, Gomme (1954); Rengakos (2006); Chiasson (2012); Currie (2021); and now articles in Matijašić (2022). On the ancient reception of Herodotus as Homeric, see Priestley (2014), 187–220.

[97] Cf. the funerary inscription monumentalizing the Greco-Persian Wars at *IG* I^3 503/504; noteworthy is the promise that the fallen are those "to whom bloom-bearing happiness returns" (C: τοῖσιμ πανθαλὲς ὄλβος ἐπιστρέ[φεται]). See too the tribe of Erechtheis' casualty list from Marathon, *SEG* 56.430; the epitaph for the Corinthians on Salamis, *ML* 24; and the famous "Serpent Column" at Delphi, *ML* 27.

[98] This is not to suggest that there was no interest in Persian history outside of poetry prior to Herodotus: Dionysius of Miletus apparently wrote the first Persian history, *Persika*, and perhaps a different work entitled, *Events After Darius*, *FGrH* 687 T 1; Charon of Lampsacus is said to have written a *Persika* before Herodotus, e.g., *FGrH* 262 F 3a; Hellanicus certainly wrote a *Persika*, it may have been in advance of the *Histories*, *FGrH* 4 F 59.

[99] Excepting Philolaus and Alcmaeon, early prose Greek philosophy is Ionic; Zeno of Elea breaks with this tradition to use the Attic dialect. For a thoughtful discussion of early Ionic prose, see Vatri (2017), 60–6. On early Greek historiography and its prose context, see Fowler (1996); Bertelli (2001); Goldhill (2002); Thomas (2003); Kurke (2011), 361–431; Andolfi (2017), 196, "written prose was the medium to challenge the most established and authoritative tradition." Kahn (2003) has speculated that there were a number of (lost) early prose technical treatises on sculpture, architecture, astronomy, music, and natural philosophy; he is followed by Sassi (2018), 84–8. See also Laks (2001). Known early prose includes geography, theogony, genealogy, and ethnography.

century philosophers may have been returning philosophy to its traditional medium.[100] Prose philosophical works abandon the traditional appeal to the Muses and in doing so cultivate a different kind of authority. This validation is an implicit – and at times explicit – rebuke of the traditional didactic preeminence of Homer and Hesiod. The *Histories* also capitalizes on the new uses to which prose is being put.[101] Like the philosophers, Herodotus rejects the traditional authority of the Muses, creating a contractual, provisional authority that is underpinned by the research of the narrator and the adjudication of his audience.[102]

The *Histories* must be situated in light of the expectations of the reading community of its time.[103] The preface's generic signals place it in a literary context that is not exactly one of splendid isolation. Drawing attention to the proem's horizon of expectations demonstrates its contacts with the Presocratic intellectual tradition. The generic experimentation evident in the philosophers in this period, as in Hippias, points to the audience's ability to navigate innovative generic forms. These readers were regularly placed, as we shall see, in the position of adapting their literary expectations to the flexible dynamism of Presocratic thinkers. The audience of the *Histories* is in a parallel position.

Using philosophy to leverage knowledge about historiography immediately confronts the messy reality that "philosophy" itself only emerges as a discrete discipline in the fourth century BCE.[104] That is to say, if generic contextualization of the *Histories* has remained opaque, this is partly because intellectual culture has yet to explicitly define itself into separate

[100] Controversially, Osborne (1998), 29–31, disputes the early supremacy of prose as the medium for philosophical writing and finds for verse, an argument that is resisted persuasively by Granger (2007), 416.

[101] Kahn (2003), 143–4; Sassi (2018), 142–51. Cf. Vatri (2017), 61, on Pherecydes, "On the one hand, the prosaic form was instrumental to marking the difference between Pherecydes' doctrine and its competitors . . . on the other, it seems to imply different occasions for performance (not 'mass' religious festivals nor poetic contests, but 'niche' public *epideixeis* . . .)."

[102] With Marincola (2006), 15, and now relevant chapters in Kingsley, Monti, and Rood (2023). See Nagy (1990), 217–27, for an argument that the prose of the *Histories* is a product of the oral tradition. Clarke (2008), 187–8, questions the extent to which the *Histories* is truly distinct from poetic treatments of history and how radical the "prose revolution" was.

[103] For which, see now Pelling (2019), who is especially interested in its relationship to medical practitioners, *passim*, but 58–79, also prose writing more generally.

[104] E.g., Long (1999), 3; Nightingale (1995), 13–14; Sassi (2018), 175. See Sluiter (2000), 192–6, for the classification of the corpus of Plato. For a summary of the beginnings of the modern history of early Greek philosophy, cf. Curd and Graham (2008), 14–21. It is constituted by the creation of the sophists as a group, Tell (2014), 263: "the sophists as we know them are a Platonic design; [that] there never existed in antiquity a group of people consistently labeled sophists." For the evolution of *philosophia*, see Moore (2019); in the Hellenistic and Roman world, see Trapp (2007).

disciplines. No one is a "historian" but nor do intellectuals define themselves as "philosophers" yet either. The term "philosopher" itself makes this clear. Its first extant use is in Heraclitus' declaration: "For it is necessary for men who are lovers of wisdom to be inquirers into quite a lot of things" (χρὴ γὰρ εὖ μάλα πολλῶν ἴστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι).[105] References to the "love of wisdom" increase from the middle of the century; we saw above that the author of *On Ancient Medicine* attributes the questions regarding what a man is from the beginning, how he came into being, and from what material to *philosophia*, issues separate from the study of medicine proper (20). Further, Gorgias' *Encomium* mentions the need to learn "philosophical arguments" (B 11.13) in the context of persuasive rhetoric. Clearly Herodotus' Croesus picks up on the term's stress of the *desire* for learning in his description of Solon as one who travels as a "lover of wisdom"; and Prodicus was said to refer to the wisest individual as occupying the territory of the "philosopher" *and* the statesman (Pl. *Euthyd.* 305c). Its use in the context of "philosophy," "rhetoric," and "history" is reflective of the broad intellectual project of the Presocratics and a lack of firm disciplinary boundaries. Still, even in these early references there is an effort to define or delimit the activity of the "love of wisdom": it can be the knowledge acquired by inquiry and travel; it may constitute persuasion – but is not in the sphere of those who study the heavens or who give speeches to thrill the masses; it can serve as the search for origins and constitution – not the practice of medicine; and it can refer to theoretical activity – not that of the active politician.[106] Conceptual narrowing is obvious in the *Dissoi Logoi* too, a text that begins by claiming that there are two arguments made "by those philosophizing (ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσοφούντων) about good and bad" (DK 90 B 1.1).[107]

[105] DK 22 B 35; see also B 129. Nightingale (1995), 13–21, gives a list of fifth-century uses of φιλοσοφεῖν and its cognates; Moore (2019) is now the fullest treatment of the term and its history. Cf. Burkert (1960); Frede (2008), 524f. Diog. Laert. 1.12, 8.8 has Pythagoras use the term "philosopher" to describe himself, as does Cic. *Tusc.* 5.3, but this is likelier to be a later retrojection. Nightingale (2004), 63, stresses the term's generality, "*philosophein* does not refer to a specialized discipline but rather to 'intellectual cultivation' in the broadest sense." Attempts to demarcate it may not be successful before Plato, but in none of the following examples is "intellectual cultivation" not specified in some way. The term is less broad than, e.g. σοφία, for which, see below.

[106] Its ability to (as an aspiration) define an entire people's devotion to learning is on display in the *epitaphios logos* of Thucydides' Pericles, who affirms "we [Athenians] are lovers of wisdom (φιλοσοφοῦμεν) without softness" (2.40.1).

[107] And by this time, it has made its way into comedy, cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 571. Laks (2018), 43–50, argues convincingly that the terms become "quasi-technical" and an "identifiable activity" in the last third

Philosophia arises out of the broader word for wisdom or skill, *sophia*, which is the more common expression for philosophical understanding in the sixth and fifth centuries.[108] It and its cognates are an umbrella for skill in a given activity. It encompasses expertise in craftsmanship (*Il.* 15.412), the discovery and playing of musical instruments (*h.Merc.* 511), and musical talent in general (F 306 MW).[109] It becomes a general concept for acute mental faculties: according to Solon, "wisdom" declines in those over sixty-three years of age (Philo, *de opif. mundi* 104.16). Pindar puts it in the province of rulers, in a fragment that describes Persephone sending up the souls of men who become kings, who are "greatest in wisdom" (F 133.4). Elsewhere, he claims that it is hateful "wisdom" to recount the wars of the gods (*Ol.* 9.38). Anaxagoras is said to have held that humans as a whole have power to exploit animals through "experience, wisdom, and skill" (B 21b). The word includes mastery of a craft as well as knowledge in a more general sense. As an agent, it approaches the notion of an "expert."[110] The wise, *sophoi*, encompass a diverse cast of philosophers, poets, musicians, doctors, scientists, artisans, and seers. For this reason, it is impossible to separate the wisdom tradition from what will come to be the disciplines of philosophy, science, the arts, and medicine. The capaciousness of the ancient concept is perhaps most powerfully articulated by Theognis, for whom *sophia* "stronger than inflexibility," is comparable to an octopus whose color changes with each passage to a new rock (1.212–17 Young).

of the fifth century; and at 42, "Even admitting that no branch of knowledge is truly specialized in the Presocratic period, one can hardly deny that a certain process of specialization can be recognized."

[108] For a discussion of the *soph-* root and the emergence of the *sophoi*, see Moore (2019), 93–104, with a focus on the Sages or *Sophoi* as a sixth-century group.

[109] See Ath. 632b–c on music and its relation to wisdom.

[110] Bibliography on σοφία, σοφιστής, and φιλοσοφία is collected by Lloyd (1987), 83 n. 115; his discussion affirms that "in the classical period you can be called σοφός in any one of the arts, painting or sculpting or flute-playing, in athletic skills, wrestling, or throwing the javelin or horsemanship, and in any of the crafts, not just in piloting a ship or healing the sick or farming but, at the limit, in cobbling or carpentry or cooking." For Herodotus as a *sophos*, see Fowler (1996), 87; Thomas (2000), 284. Herodotus often blurs "wise" (*sophos*) and "cunning," cf. Sandanis at 1.71.2; Deioces at 1.96.1; Melampus at 2.49.2; the horse-keeper of Darius at 3.85.1; the Scythian king uses it contingently of the Persians, if they decipher his riddling gifts to Darius at 4.131.2; Histiaeus at 5.23.2; Aristagoras at 5.50.2; Chilon at 7.235.2; Themistocles 8.110.1–3, 8.124.1. And Athenians were first in *sophia* at the time of the return of Peisistratus, 1.60.3. Often the *soph*-root has associations of innovativeness or trickery, cf. 1.80.4; 2.20.1; 2.66.2; 2.172.2; 3.4.2; 3.85.1–2; 3.111.3; 3.127.2; 4.76.2; 7.23.3; 8.27.3; 8.124.2. The Persian armament is apparently no match for Greek *sophia*, 9.62.3. For trickery in Herodotus, see Hollmann (2011), 211–44, 257–66, and 240, for a brief discussion of *sophia*.

In the fifth century, the term "sophist" (σοφιστής) emerges and is nearly indistinguishable from the *sophos*.[111] Pindar and Aeschylus use it in reference to musical experts (*Isth.* 5.28; Aesch. F 314).[112] It also can indicate an "intellectual" or "deviser," with their respective positive and negative valences.[113] Apparently, Diogenes of Apollonia used the term for the natural philosophers (φυσιολόγους) who he aimed his work against (DK 64 A 4), a usage that seems to follow the author of *On Ancient Medicine*'s reference to sophists as those who wrote about nature.[114] Aristophanes' Socrates humorously identifies the sophists as diviners, medical practitioners, lazy long-haired dandies with rings, song-twisters of the dithyramb chorus, quacks who call themselves astronomy experts, and composers (*Nub.* 331–4). Herodotus' own usage tracks this level of generality, though without negative connotations: the political and ethical wisdom figures – including Solon – who visit the court of Croesus are sophists (1.29);[115] sophists teach the worship of Dionysus following Melampus' Egyptian borrowings (2.49.1); finally, Pythagoras is a sophist (4.95.2). The absence of fine-grained distinctions among intellectuals in the period in which Herodotus is writing reaffirms the trouble that comes with interpreting philosophical inquiry in isolation. Still, in spite of the capacious research interests and the absence of hardened discursive boundaries in the wisdom tradition, there remain family resemblances in philosophical-scientific treatises stretching back over a century by the time Herodotus was composing. The swathe of natural scientific, ethical, theological, linguistic, and rhetorical *topoi* parodied in, for example, Aristophanes' *Clouds* suggests the presence of a set of diverse but recognizable concerns that preoccupied intellectual culture. Moreover, the

[111] For the identity of *sophos* and sophists much later, see Plut. *E ap. Delph.* 3 385d–e; Diog. Laert. 1.12, who reports that Cratinus called Hesiod, Homer, and their followers "sophists." I follow Grote (1846–56), iii.43, in treating the negative tradition of the sophists as irrelevant for the fifth century and as an unfortunate result of the vicissitudes of transmission via Plato and Aristotle, who are often hostile to their fifth-century predecessors, *pace* Provencal (2015), *passim*. The latter's thesis that Herodotus uniformly rejects sophistic thought quite unpersuasively retrojects Plato's assessment of these thinkers onto the *Histories*.

[112] Sophocles' son Iophon apparently called rhapsodes sophists, *Strom.* 1.3.24.2 = *TrGF*[2] 22 F 1. Still used in the fourth century, e.g., [Eur.] *Rh.* 925, 949.

[113] Cf. [Aesch.] *PV*, at 62, Prometheus is called a σοφιστής by Power; at 944, by Hermes; in both cases the term is associated with his attempts to outwit Zeus. It has a positive valence at Eur. *Hipp.* 921; negative at Th. 3.38.7; Eur. *Heracl.* 993. Sophists are associated with rhetorical manipulation already at Ar. *Nub.* 1111.

[114] Demetrius of Troezen wrote *Against the Sophists* around the first century CE discussing Empedocles, which might suggest that the term continued to be used in relation to the natural philosophers, Diog. Laert. 8.74.

[115] Following Wilson's text at 1.29.1 of οἵ τε ἄλλοι.

engagement of fifth-century comedy, tragedy, and medical treatises with this material confirms these questions had a broad audience.[116]

What then are we to call this group? I have chosen to refer to it as "Presocratic" in this book, but this language is not uncontroversial. The word only appears in the late eighteenth century and is popularized in Hermann Diels' seminal edition of the early Greek philosophers, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1903).[117] One virtue of Diels' designation is that it includes the natural philosophers and also the so-called sophists, who should be read alongside one another. A failing is that it regularly misses relevant material from tragedians, comic poets, and historians. But beyond the anachronism of the designation "Presocratic" and its narrow breadth, there are chronological and thematic problems that arise in referring to these figures as pre-Socratic. Chronologically, the philosophers included in Diels' edition continue into the fourth century, following the death of Socrates. The more pressing issue for our purposes is that in neither content nor method are they radically different from what we are given to understand of Socrates' own philosophy. Thematically, they focus on – among other things – natural philosophy and the human, subjects of inquiry not qualitatively different from Socrates, at least according to Aristophanes. By contrast, Plato and Xenophon agree that Socrates was suspicious of natural philosophy, but he is not alone in this either, even if his reasons for suspicion appear unique.[118] Nor is Socrates the first to practice the dialectic method, the discussion through question and answer.[119] The above qualifications of Socrates' distinctiveness may be rejected as too extreme. But interpreting him as a watershed figure in the history of philosophy depends largely on a Platonic reading of Socrates. For all of these reasons, perhaps "Pre-Platonic" would be preferable or "early Greek philosophers."[120] By convention, I continue to use the label "Presocratic" for its ready familiarity and its ability to demarcate the figures in the sixth and fifth centuries in what will become the fields of science and philosophy, with an awareness that Socrates may not be quite the

[116] Cf. Ps-Dion. Hal. *Rhet.* 8.11 on old comedy's aspirations to philosophy. For the relationship of tragedy to philosophy, see Billings (2021).

[117] Prominent from its popularization by Zeller (1856–68). For a discussion of the moniker, see Long (1999), 5–8; Warren (2007), 1–6; Laks (2018), 19–34; Wardy (2019).

[118] E.g., Zeno and Melissus, in response to Parmenides. For Socrates, Pl. *Phd.* 96a–100a; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.11–16.

[119] Nehamas (1999), 110–11, with reference to Pl. *Gorg.* 449b–c; *Prt.* 335a; *Euthyd.* 272d.

[120] Wardy (2019), 60–2, identifies Plato as a "focal philosopher," the center of a web of relationships between thinkers that is made to constitute Pre-Platonic philosophy. Laks-Most use "early Greek philosophy" for their Loeb series.

transitional figure that this language presupposes and that this group embraces a larger class than what is found in Diels.[121]

Conclusion: Clio, Love of Wisdom

Genres have no essence and no clear boundaries. They survive by change both diachronic and synchronic.[122] Since their taxonomies are unstable, it is easiest to rely upon meta-commentary to do the work of identifying what constitutes a work's place in a particular genre. Yet this placement is wholly dependent upon the audience that negotiates its status. Status is liable to shift given new and ever-changing audience expectations within a genre. This is evident in the *Histories*' reception as historiography but equally in its rejection by later authors as historiography due to its perceived failure to observe the standards of the tradition. Ctesias apparently called Herodotus a liar and a λογοποιός (*logopoios*), "writer of tall tales" (*FGrH* 688 F 8); Ps.-Aristotle dubs him a μυθογράφος ("writer of legends") in the context of his discussion of the flooding of the Nile (*BNJ* 87 F 79a); for Dio Chrysostom too he is a λογοποιός, in a reference to his false stories about Corinth (*Or.* 37.7); and Lucian uses the same term of Herodotus' tale that Arganthonius lived to 150 years of age, which Lucian confirms some refer to as a *mythos* (*Macrobii* 10). So too Plutarch exploits the negative post-Platonic conception of the sophists' activities by arguing that Herodotus' inquiry tracks their own practice of making the worse account the better (*Malice* 855e). In each of these instances, Herodotus' standing as a historian is undermined by the suggestion that his *Histories* does not quite meet the requirements of the genre.[123]

Since there is little explicit ancient critical discussion of historiography as a genre, it is often necessary to rely on the discursive practice of historiography as a guide, which implies certain expectations and values about historiography as a genre. In the first section of this chapter, we saw that the dialogue between Solon and Croesus on the nature of human well-being serves as a metanarrative for the *Histories*' exploration of

[121] For a defense of the designation as appropriate given the "spiritual watershed" of Socratic philosophy and the fact that Presocratic philosophy does not survive intact by contrast with its successors, see Laks (2018), 32–4.

[122] Marincola (1999), 299–300, 309–21.

[123] Arist. *Gen. an.* 756b: Herodotus is ὁ μυθολόγος; Arr. *Anab.* 5.6.5: Herodotus and Hecataeus are οἱ λογοποιοί; Them. *Or.* ii.367c (Downey-Norman-Schenkl): ὁ μυθογράφος. Cf. Hdt. 2.143.1, 5.125, 5.36.2. On the reception of Herodotus as a lying historian, illuminating are Momigliano (1958); Evans (1968); Marincola (1997), 118 n. 285, 132, 227, 255–6; Priestley (2014), 209–19. For an excellent assessment of his reputation in the Roman tradition, see Racine (2016).

philosophical questions through its reflection upon the human past. Solon's calculation of the days constituting a man's life totalled them at twenty-six thousand, two hundred and fifty. It is an impressively large number – even if the math has been fudged. But this display-piece is only marshalled in order for Solon to conclude that no day mirrors another, that is, even a sage can make no prognostication on Croesus' well-being because of the impossibility of using individual experience as a guide. Instead, Solon turns to Athenian and Argive history. In this way, the human past is exploited for philosophical clarity. The remainder of the book will develop this insight and suggest that Herodotean inquiry can be fruitfully considered as a product of fifth-century intellectual culture.

But what precisely might we gain from redrawing these generic boundaries? Situating early Greek historiography in its context in the fifth century is not simply a matter of broadening Herodotus' intellectual affinities. These questions determine how we understand the rise of historiography as a genre and the direction that it subsequently takes. The poly-generic nature of historiography continues long after it has become a discrete discipline. Diodorus Siculus, for example, opens his universal history with a return to the issue of human *eudaimonia*. Well-being is perfected, he maintains, through exposure to men founding cities, passing just legislation, and inventing new arts and sciences for the benefit of mankind. Above all, historiography confronts its audience with these actions and causes the individual to move toward self-fashioning. History is, Diodorus then proclaims, "as though a mother-city of all philosophy" (1.2.2: τῆς ὅλης φιλοσοφίας οἱονεὶ μητρόπολιν οὖσαν).[124] The metaphor indicates the intellectual dependency of philosophy on historiography and the marked priority of the latter. Diodorus' interpretation is evidently not responding directly to the *Histories*. Nonetheless, it approaches the project of historiography from a similar standpoint, one that is responding to the interests and the intellectual relationships that the *Histories*, in part, determines. Of course, we could interpret this as history's evolution from generic purity to miscegenation, as an attempt to draw upon the enormous

[124] Burton (1972), 36–8, hesitantly accepts influence from Ephorus or Posidonius in chapters 1–2; Sacks (2018), 57–8 rightly, to my mind, rejects the ascription to Posidonius, and considers the sentiment in light of Diodorus' commitment to *parrhesia*. For this passage, see Rathmann (2016), 279–80. In making this competitive declaration, Diodorus may be reworking Chrysippus, who had humorously called the *Gastronomy*, Archestratus' parodic epic poem on dining, the "mother-city of the philosophy of Epicurus," at Ath. 104b. Archestratus' proem parodies, incidentally, the Herodotean style: ἱστορίης ἐπίδειγμα ποιούμενος Ἑλλάδι πάσῃ (F 1 Olson-Sens = *SH* 132: "making a display of inquiry for all of Greece").

cultural cachet granted to philosophy. Yet this commits historiography to a generic essentialism that begs the question.

The interpretation of historiography as a genre capable of expressing philosophical truths is, significantly, ubiquitous in the reception of Herodotus' immediate successor, Thucydides. In making an argument that philosophy advances a "common character," the anonymous author of the *Ars rhetorica* uses, after Plato, Thucydides' methodological statement on the clarity to be gained on the future by his work to make the case for philosophy operating through history (1.22): "Thucydides seems to say this when he speaks about history, that history is philosophy by examples."[125] Whether or not Thucydides is in fact advocating this in his statement on the utility of his work, his *History* is being understood as doing the same work as philosophy. Likewise, the tradition in the *Vita* of Marcellinus places the Athenian historian in the company of the great sophists and philosophers, Gorgias (36, 51), Antiphon (22), Anaxagoras (22), and Prodicus (36).[126] In those speeches that admit an answering speech, we are told that the historian "philosophizes" (53). Despite the dubious historical value of the ancient biography, this work represents a critical window into the ancient reception of Thucydides, one that saw his *History* as emerging out of an environment of fifth-century philosophical thought. There is no image so revealing of this interpretation as Marcellinus' description of Thucydides composing his history "under a plane tree" (25: ὑπὸ πλατάνῳ ἔγραφεν) – the *locus philosophicus* beginning with Plato's *Phaedrus*.[127]

If Thucydidean historiography is interpreted as poly-generic, it is not alone.[128] In the second century BCE, Polybius accused Timaeus of slandering others with words that he himself could be described with, asserting that Timaeus was argumentative, a liar, and audacious. He was even "unphilosophical" (ἀφιλόσοφος).[129] If, as it seems, Polybius is turning Timaeus' criticism of others against him, then Timaeus' insult may have

[125] Ps-Dion. Hal. *Rhet.* 11.2: τοῦτο καὶ Θουκυδίδης ἔοικεν λέγειν, περὶ ἱστορίας λέγων, ὅτι καὶ ἱστορία φιλοσοφία ἐστὶν ἐκ παραδειγμάτων (Radermacher-Usener).

[126] For Thucydides and fifth-century intellectual culture, see Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 24, 46; Ps-Dion. Hal. *Rhet.* 11.2; Plut. *X orat.* 832e; Philostr. *Ep.* 73; Hermog. *Id.* 2.11, 2.12, Rabe; Σ in Ael. Ar. *Orat.* 124.14, Dindorf; Σ in Th. 4.135.2.

[127] Cf. Hippoc. *Ep.* 17 (Littré) for Hippocrates' discovery of Democritus sitting under a plane tree, writing and reading in turn, with dissected animals surrounding his feet.

[128] Kraus (2013), thoughtfully discusses poly-generic Roman historiography, focusing upon Caesar.

[129] *FGrH* 566 T 19.6 = Polyb. 12.25.6. Walbank (1972), 32, speaking of the education of Polybius, notes that in addition to Timaeus, Prusias II is also accused of being unphilosophical (36.15.5); Walbank records the philosophers Polybius mentions, though with the caveat that his philosophical knowledge is "superficial" (33), but his n. 4 works against this, Diod. Sic. 31.26.5.

been levied against the historian and nephew of Aristotle accompanying Alexander the Great, Callisthenes. We are told that Timaeus said that Callisthenes was a flatterer and "quite distant from philosophy" (πλεῖστον ἀπέχειν φιλοσοφίας), writing as he did.[130] In the same fragment, Callisthenes *is* subsequently identified as a philosopher but as one who is struck down by the divine for his actions in supporting the impious deification of the mortal Alexander. Elsewhere, Polybius accuses Timaeus and his ilk of falling into the trap of the Academic Sceptics, with their obsession over paradox and doubt (12.26c–d). This set of references to philosophy and historiography in Polybius is as valuable as it is difficult to parse given the fragmentary nature of all three of the historians. Callisthenes' identification as a philosopher by Timaeus may signal that Callisthenes' reputation as one – he is commonly referred to as one in the sources – arose from self-identification in his work;[131] this would be what Timaeus challenges or ironizes. Meanwhile Polybius' criticism against Timaeus as "unphilosophical" suggests the aspiration of the ideal historian is just this. Polybius' further warnings about the dangers of Timaeus' turn toward the paradoxical imply that he was concerned to interpret the historian within the context of a philosophical intellectual culture. Theopompus seems to have made a similar claim in the preface to his *Philippica*, opposing the acquisitive sophistic activities of his contemporaries, Isocrates and Theodectes, with his own self-sufficient philosophical study (αὐτάρκως ἔχοντας ... ἀεὶ τὴν διατριβὴν ἐν τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ φιλομαθεῖν ποιεῖσθαι).[132] More detailed information on this kind of historiography is present in the philosopher Posidonius' *Histories*, which was said to be composed "no differently than his philosophy" (*FGrH* 87 T 12a). Indeed, he is continually referred to as a philosopher and not a historian in spite of the historical content of both of his known published works. A similar hybridity could be seen, we are told, in the account of one Cleombrotus of Sparta, who composed his history as material for his philosophy.[133] This phenomenon was common enough to be parodied in Lucian's *How to Write History*, which tells of an anonymous historian of

[130] *FGrH* 566 F 155.

[131] Callisthenes' major works include a list entitled, *Pythian Victors*, apparently cowritten with Aristotle; *The Third Sacred War*; a *Hellenica*; and a *Deeds of Alexander*, see *FGrH* 124. In none of these is his frequent designation as "philosopher" clearly warranted; though it is speculative, it is possible that it arose from his historical works.

[132] *FGrH* 115 F 25: "(he says that they) were self-sufficient ... they always spent time in the pursuit of wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge."

[133] Plut. *De def. or.* 410b: συνῆγεν ἱστορίαν οἷον ὕλην φιλοσοφίας θεολογίαν ὥσπερ αὐτὸς ἐκάλει τέλος ἐχούσης. ("He was putting together a history as the material for his philosophy, which had

the Parthian War who established in his proem that the philosopher alone should write history.[134]

Situating Herodotus in line with Presocratic culture will demonstrate that this *historie* contains generic miscegenation already in the fifth century that made it receptive to the concerns of later philosophy. If this argument is persuasive, then the above examples cannot be interpreted quite so readily as departures from the generic purity of historiography but will be continuing to draw on philosophy's relationship to the inquiry into the human past.[135] That is, historiography will be competing with philosophy for authority in the field of Greek *paideia* as it comes to have its own generic self-consciousness, but this competition is itself partly determined by a shared discursive framework.

The aim of the book is to situate Herodotus as an active participant in philosophical debates in the fifth century, a fact that will simultaneously enrich a literary reading of the *Histories*. As one of the few complete works of scientific *historie* to survive from the fifth century, this text has the potential to deepen our awareness of the problems occupying contemporary philosophical intellectuals, in particular in light of its own aspirations. This is part of a broader effort to demonstrate the presence of philosophical language and themes in historiography, suggesting that we should expand our understanding of the poetics of historiography and its horizon of expectation. The following chapters canvass debates on custom, self-interest, nature, and epistemology in the *Histories* and demonstrate engagement in various ways. Philosophy contributes to the nascent genre thematically, as in the recurrence of issues centering on relativism. It underwrites *historie* through aetiology, by using the circumscribed boundaries of "human nature" as a means of explaining human action. In addition, it orients the text methodologically, in its contestation of truth claims and its problematization of verification. These modes of philosophical interaction should not be taken as exhaustive. That is, the book does not attempt to consider every passage in which philosophical "influence" has been detected. In each instance, it considers a prominent philosophical concept or set of intersecting questions, by exploring its position in the

theology as its *telos*, as he himself called it.") See too the tradition on Nicolaus of Damascus as a philosopher-historian, *BNJ* 90 T 1–2, 10b, 11b, F 78, 99, 132, 135, 137–8.

[134] Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 17 = *FGrH* 206 F 1. Evidently, philosophy was threatened enough to respond, challenging history's benefits, e.g., Max. Tyr. *Diss.* 22.5–7 (Trapp).

[135] E.g., Diod. Sic. 1.37: ἐπικεχειρήκασι πολλοὶ τῶν τε φιλοσόφων καὶ τῶν ἱστορικῶν ἀποδιδόναι τὰς ταύτης αἰτίας. ("Many philosophers and historians have attempted to give an account of its causes.")

intellectual tradition broadly conceived. It proceeds by close philological reading of the *Histories*' engagement with such debates, although intertextuality alone will not be the barometer of interaction.

In Chapter 2, "Relativism, King of All," we turn to Herodotus' engagement with the philosophical debate on relativism. There is a common consensus that Herodotus supports *nomos* in the *Histories* without qualification. By contrast, this chapter argues that this interpretation fails to capture the complexity of Herodotus' engagement with those figures who use *nomos* as a rhetorical ploy to justify what is contrary to popular ethics. Presocratic thinkers were likewise working through the challenges presented by those who identified *nomos* as only a relative set of values as opposed to an objective norm to be followed. The *Histories*' exploration of the problem of relating custom and law to justice takes place in the context of the rise and expansion of Persian imperialism. As we shall see, it implicates the despot in a relativizing of justice and constitutes a key explanatory paradigm in the Persian attack against the Greek mainland in the Greco-Persian Wars.

Chapter 3, "The Pull of Tradition: Egoism and Persian Revolution," moves to the debate on self-interest and profit and its impact on traditional ethics. Fifth-century intellectual culture reveals a variety of positions on how to view human action undertaken to maximize self-interest. Herodotus' narration of the conspiracy to dethrone the False Smerdis is a key episode demonstrating the contest between the concerns of the individual and the plurality, in particular in terms of the actions and speeches of Otanes, Darius, and Prexaspes on the individual and the community and on truth and falsehood. The chapter analyzes the conspiracy and its aftermath alongside, among other texts, Antiphon's *On Truth* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. Though the *Histories* is seldom put in dialogue with these works, the chapter argues that they share a common interest in the consequences of rugged individualism for the civic body. The ascension of Darius as the Great King through self-interest establishes the persistence of the profit motive in the figure of the ruler and its deleterious effects on the populace.

The concentration on ethical debates surrounding custom and advantage transitions in Chapter 4, "History *peri physeos*," to the role of *physis* in the *Histories*. This concept has long been neglected in Herodotus, in large part due to the prominence of its counterpart, *nomos*, but also because of the absence of a strong opposition of *nomos* and *physis*. When it has been treated, it has been by anachronistically viewing natural environment as synonymous with *physis*. By contrast, this chapter challenges the

assimilation of environment to *physis*. It argues that Herodotean *physis* is characterized as a set of stable underlying characteristics that creates limits on form and action. Significantly, environmental conditions are not viewed as informing human *physis*, which is seen as stable across regional difference, in contrast with, for example, the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*. The consistency of *physis* removes human nature as a causal paradigm for explaining action on, for example, the battlefield.

How does the *Histories* explain the success of the Greeks against the vastly superior force of the Persians in the Greco-Persian Wars? Chapter 5, "*Physis* on the Battlefield," turns to an important motif in the work, the potential of surpassing *physis*. Presocratic, and later, Platonic thinkers were equally interested in the question of whether and how one might master human nature. In the *Histories*, this discussion is connected to issues of compulsion and bravery. It becomes evident, however, that the explanatory power of transcending *physis* has its limits and that the expectations of the historical actors in the text who refer to it are not straightforwardly confirmed by the narrative action. The juxtaposition of speech and deed points to Herodotus' problematization of *physis* as a causal paradigm explaining success.

Herodotus' unique "voiceprint" has attracted much attention from modern scholars. Chapter 6, "Historical Inquiry and Presocratic Epistemology," picks up this interest in the narratorial voice in terms of Herodotus' reticence in making firm truth claims. In line with Presocratic thinkers reimagining the relationship of their work to truth and authoritative discourse, the *Histories* often cultivates a resistance to epistemic certainty. "What is said" and "what seems" are found with much greater frequency than "what is true." Juxtaposing the *Histories* with contemporary discussions on epistemology will demonstrate the extent to which claims to the truth were problematized as a standard of inquiry in the fifth century.

This book cannot hope to canvass all interactions between historiography and philosophy in the period under consideration. Its focus upon the *Histories* and its relation to intellectual culture looks to specific debates and attempts to contextualize their presence in what will become the genre of historiography. It is to be hoped that this will spur additional research. Chapter 7, "Herodotean Philosophy," takes the *Dissoi Logoi* as a case study on the reception of Herodotus by philosophy in the early fourth century. The treatise's engagement with relativism and the *Histories* will illuminate the early impact Herodotus made on sophistic circles, pointing toward the role of historiography *avant la lettre* in the generation and communication of philosophical insight.

CHAPTER 2

Relativism, King of All

Herodotus' exploration of diverse human populations and their equally wide-ranging *nomoi* (νόμοι) contributed to one of the most significant debates in fifth-century intellectual culture – on relativism and its implications for traditional ethical norms.[1] Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 7, already in the fourth-century *Dissoi Logoi*, the *Histories* was being read and engaged with as an influential text on the subject. It is for this reason unsurprising that there has been much important work on "custom," "tradition," and "law" in the context of Ionian ethnography and the ethnographic excurses in the *Histories*.[2] These passages serve a circumscribed but crucial diegetic function: in giving pause to the diachronic narrative progression, *nomoi* draw a relatively static portrait of a given society, often in relation to its confrontation with the imperial power of Persia.

The etymological roots of *nom-* terms in νέμω (*nemo*), "to allot, dispense, distribute," have been used to argue for early associations with distribution and lawfulness.[3] Ancient authors may have made the

[1] Notable treatments of *nomos* and the *Histories* include Stier (1928), 239ff.; Heinimann (1945), 23–36, 78–83; Pohlenz (1953), 425, 428–30; Gigante (1956), 107–9, 123–45; Evans (1961), (1965), (1991), 9–40; Immerwahr (1966), 319–22; Herrmann (1967), 116–24; Waters (1971), 97–9; Dihle (1981), 59–61; Giraudeau (1984), 115–35; Redfield (1985), *passim*; Humphreys (1987); Gould (1989), 94–109; Lateiner (1989), 145–62; Bloomer (1993); Scanlon (1994), 171–4; Payen (1995), 308–38; Hardy (1996); Thomas (2000), 102–34; Munson (2001), 88–100; Mikalson (2003), 13, 28, 50–1; Baragwanath (2008), 107–10. On cultural pluralism in Herodotus, see Apfel (2011), 191–206. For *nomos* and the sophists, see Guthrie (1969), 164–75; Ostwald (1969), 24–5, 31, 35; Kerferd (1981), 54–5, 111–30.

[2] Major contributions to the vast study of ethnography in the *Histories* include Redfield (1985), 97–118; Thomas (2000), *passim*; Munson (2001), 135–72, especially 156–72; Bertelli (2001), 67–94; Bichler (2004); Rood (2006); Figueira and Soares (2020). For specific case studies: on Egypt, see A. Lloyd (2002), 415–36; Scythia, Hartog (1988); West (2002), 437–56; Babylon, Kuhrt (2002), 475–96; Skinner (2012), 238–48. On women and *nomoi*, Rosellini and Saïd (1978), 949–1005.

[3] Benveniste (1948), 79, "νέμω signifie 'partager *légalement*; faire une attribution *régulière*'"; accepted by Chantraine s.v. νέμω. Beekes (2010) s.v. νέμω, finds the derivations of meanings from the verb

connection as well; there is evidence for polyptoton in the collocation of νόμος and νέμω. The juxtaposition made could be contrastive – Theognis complains to Cyrnus that the new inhabitants of the polis were those who formerly "knew neither justice nor laws" (1.54 Young: οὔτε δίκας ᾔδεσαν οὔτε νόμους), since they used to "pasture" (1.56: ἐνέμοντο) in the fields like deer.[4] However, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, the chorus of Egyptian women wish for the good government (670: εὖ νέμοιτο) of the city of Athens in return for the people's honoring of Zeus, who sets fate right with law (673: νόμῳ). In the pseudo-Platonic *Minos*, Socrates plays upon the associations of νομεύς, νέμω, and νόμος (317d–18a). There is one instance in which νέμω and νόμος are related in the *Histories*, when Herodotus finds that for the Egyptians and the Persians alike the burning of the dead is contrary to custom (3.16.3: οὐδαμῶς ἐν νόμῳ); regarding the Persians, they do not even "allot" (νέμειν) corpses to gods. In these instances, it is unclear the extent to which the *figura etymologica* was activated by the audience, but since it is not prominent in the *Histories*, the following analysis will focus upon *nomos* alone.

Beyond etymology, conceptualizing *nomos* has long exercised the energies of scholars. In an authoritative study, Martin Ostwald argued that "νόμος in all its uses describes an order of some kind, which differs from other words for 'order,' such as τάξις, in connotation that this order is or ought to be regarded as valid and binding by those who live under it . . . the crucial point is that, regardless of origin, it is recognized and acknowledged as the valid norm within a given milieu."[5] This captures well the implicit deontic potential of the term. Writing specifically on Herodotus, James Redfield observes:

> *Nomos* means something more explicit than *ethea*, something more definite as command or prohibition. Very often a *nomos* is a written law (and that may be the original meaning of the word); when used for a custom it means something which can be put into words and stated as a rule. *Nomoi* are specifically human; the word has no relevance to animals. Furthermore, *nomoi* are the sign of a certain level of culture; every people has its *ethea*, but

such as Benveniste's "problematic." Etymology has been important historically as an avenue of interpretation, see Schröder (1917), 197, who connects the term to νεμ-, and pasturage; cf. too Demos (1994), 99.

[4] For further conjunctions, see *TrGF* F 1064 Kannicht; Eur. *Hec.* 866–8; Eur. *Supp.* 378–9; Antiph. 5.10.

[5] Ostwald (1969), 20–1. Pohlenz (1948), "das Brauchtum"; Havelock (1957), 137–8, gives "custom-law" and "usage-that-is-solemn"; Herrmann (1967), 116, "Sitte oder Brauchtum," although it can also mean, 117, "sakrale Regel," "religiöse Sitte," "kultische Übung," close to "kultische Regel," "sakral Norm," "religiöse Vorschrift."

> the most savage people have no *nomoi* at all . . . they are incapable of stating rules for themselves. (1985), 98–9

The contrast of *nomos* with *ethea*, "customs" or "manners," signals that *nomos* is distinct in its imposition of obligation and its reference to a culturally advanced set of behaviors.[6] In the *Histories*, the Androphagoi have savage *ethea*, as practitioners of cannibalism, but observe no *nomos* (4.106).[7] *Nomos* can be written or unwritten; it can be interpreted variously as "custom," "tradition," or "law." To capture this polyvalence, it is simplest to transliterate *nomos* – and the synonyms *nomima* and *nomaia* – with the understanding that it can refer to each of these definitions.[8]

Herodotus' interest in including foreign *nomoi* appears to have its roots in epic as well as in geographical prose literature. This earlier fictional and factual mapping of the world has left little to clarify the *histor*'s use of *nomos* as an index of ethnographic research.[9] Nonetheless, there are suggestive hints. We are told that Charon of Lampsacus, a near contemporary of Herodotus, composed a *Cretan Histories* in three books, which included a discussion of the *nomoi* of Minos.[10] Hecataeus of Miletus' oeuvre included ethnographic excurses close to those found in the *Histories*, commenting on local geography, flora, fauna, and cultural practices. Tantalizingly, Plato's Hippias boasts that his epideictic *Trojan Speech* included a demonstration of πάμπολλα νόμιμα καὶ πάγκαλα, "manifold and quite seemly *nomima*."[11] Were Herodotus' predecessors extant in this field, they would likely have provided rich information on *nomos* interpreted as a traditional rite, custom, usage, pertaining to clothing, diet, religion, medicine, language, and marriage practices.[12] Even in their absence, Herodotean scholars have plowed a deep furrow discussing Herodotus' attitude to foreign cultures.

[6] See Hes. *Theog*. 66, for their presence among the divine.

[7] Munson (2001), 98–100, intriguingly links the homogeneity of human *physis* with *nomos*, given the general "human impulse toward self-regulation and culture" (100); the Androphagoi's rejection of *nomoi*, however, present an obstacle to this model.

[8] With, e.g., Guthrie (1969), 56–7, *pace* Giraudeau (1984), e.g., 135, who artificially separates the "religious" meaning from its "civic" one.

[9] I have been unable to find any *nom-* terms in the fragments of Euagon of Samos, Deiochos of Prokonnesos, Eudemos of Naxos, or Hecataeus of Miletus, though the loss of the majority of their works hardly makes this conclusive.

[10] *FGrH* 262 F 1. The late statement that Hellanicus composed τὰ Βαρβαρικὰ Νόμιμα from the works of Herodotus and Damastes, *FGrH* 4 F 72 is of interest, if ultimately unverifiable. For this work, which *FHG* 1.69 thought a forgery, cf. also *FGrH* 4 F 73, where the narrative of Zalmoxis is nearly identical to Hdt. 4.95. More generally, see Fowler (1996), 66–7.

[11] For Nestor's speech to Neoptolemus, see DK 86 A 9 = Pl. *Hp. mai*. 286b.

[12] For these practices in the *Histories* as *nomoi*, see Giraudeau (1984), 122–6.

Much less prominent are studies considering Herodotus' relation to the contemporary philosophical marketplace of ideas. This is all the more surprising given the prominence of the debate on relativism in philosophical circles. As Dihle notes: "Reflection on the nature, impact, and differences of *nomoi* was, as the scanty remains prove, also the subject of contemporary philosophy."[13] Diogenes Laertius preserves a provocative notice on the mid fifth-century philosopher, Archelaus. According to this admittedly late report, the teacher of Socrates philosophized on *nomoi*, both the fine and the just, and attributed ethical concepts to the field of *nomos* in its familiar opposition to *physis*: "for he philosophized about the laws, both the noble and the just;" "that justice and shamefulness are not by nature, but by convention" (DK 60 A 1: καὶ γὰρ περὶ νόμων πεφιλοσόφηκεν καὶ καλῶν καὶ δικαίων; A 2: καὶ τὸ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ).[14] The decoupling of ethical values from objective reality and their placement in the realm of *nomos*, "convention," has serious implications for custom, tradition, and law. If this *testimonium* preserves accurate information, Archelaus is among the first to draw attention to this opposition. It is difficult, however, to put too much weight on the late report, and so we should remain agnostic as to his influence on philosophy and *nomos*.[15]

Firmer ground emerges with the historical Protagoras, who famously enunciated a relativistic thesis in his seminal *Truth*, or, *The Overthrowing Arguments*.[16] Its incipit survives as follows: "Of all things the measure is man, of those that are (the case), that/how they are (the case), and of those that are not (the case), that/how they are not (the case)" (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ οὐκ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν).[17] While nearly every word in this fragment is

[13] Dihle (1981), 61, "Reflexion auf Wesen, Wirkung und Verschiedenheit der *Nomoi* war aber, wie es die spärlichen Überreste erweisen, auch Gegenstand zeitgenössischer Philosophie." For Presocratic references to *nomos*, DK 21 B 2.13; DK 22 B 14, B 114, B 33.

[14] For Archelaus, see Kahn (1981), 102–3; Betegh (2016).

[15] There is reason for optimism, as the concern for *nomos* occurs elsewhere in the tradition on Archelaus, cf. DK 60 A 4.6. By the time of Empedocles, *nomos* could be defined as tradition *as opposed* to what is true, DK 31 B 9.5. Seemingly opposite is B 135.1, on the murder of living things, which begins with the injunction τὸ μὲν πάντων νόμιμον ("that which is lawful for all").

[16] Although Heraclitus may have anticipated him, for which, see DK 22 B 61. On Protagoras and relativism, see Guthrie (1969), 165–75; Jordan (1971); McDowell (1973); Kahn (1973), (1981); Farrar (1988), 44–98; Bett (1989); Schiappa (1991a), 117–33; Caizzi (1999); Woodruff (1999); Too (2005), 30–45.

[17] Trans. Berkel (2013), 37. DK 80 B 1 = Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.60. Cited in Pl. *Tht.* 152a2–4 and Diog. Laert. 9.51. Important for interpretation of this fragment are Versenyi (1962); Guthrie (1969), 166–75; Mansfeld (1981), 43; Barnes (1979), ii.239–51; Kerferd (1981), 85; Lee (2005); Zilioli (2012); Berkel (2013), 37–68.

debated, the main outlines are accepted, namely, that the philosopher advances a form of relativism compatible with human perception and judgment. Though we have lost the treatise, Protagoras' man-measure doctrine was, fortunately, the beneficiary of serious and sustained philosophical interest, at least by the fourth century. Its implications for *nomos* will become clear from a brief look at Plato's construal of Protagoras.

Plato's relatively uncontroversial interpretation of the doctrine takes the following form: "doesn't he say something about like this, as things seem to me so they are to me, and as things seem to you, so they are to you – and you and I are 'man'?"[18] Protagoras expounds a form of subjective relativism, whereby whatever an *individual* perceives is infallibly correct.[19] In this form of relativism, differing individuals can apply opposing predicates to what is apparently the same subject without inconsistency. If honey is sweet to me, but bitter for you, these are equally true predicates for us both.[20] However, in addition to this position, in the *Theaetetus*, "Protagoras" equally stakes out a claim for what has been called "social" relativism. Reflections on the individual transition into a discussion of the behavior of communities. Socrates gives voice to Protagoras' position as follows:[21]

> οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ πολιτικῶν, καλὰ μὲν καὶ αἰσχρὰ καὶ δίκαια καὶ ἄδικα καὶ ὅσια καὶ μή, οἷα ἂν ἑκάστη πόλις οἰηθεῖσα θῆται νόμιμα αὑτῇ, ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἑκάστῃ, καὶ ἐν τούτοις μὲν οὐδὲν σοφώτερον οὔτε ἰδιώτην ἰδιώτου οὔτε πόλιν πόλεως εἶναι. (*Tht.* 172a)

[18] DK 80 B 1 = Pl. *Tht.* 152a. See also Pl. *Cra.* 385e = DK 80 A 13. Closely related is *VM* 3.

[19] Cf. Pl. *Prt.* 334a–c and a play on Protagorean relativism at 334e. As Guthrie (1969), 171, observes, this has a pedigree in earlier philosophy: "Anaxagoras told his pupils that 'things would be for them such as they supposed them to be,' and Empedocles and Parmenides emphasized the connexion between a man's physical condition and his thoughts." For the fragment including judgments, see Barnes (1979), ii.240–1; Mansfeld (1981), 44.

[20] For what may be an actual exemplum of Protagoras, Pl. *Tht.* 152b1–c8, and for this passage, Kerferd (1981), 86–97. The heated debate on whether this variability is the product of an internal principle of honey or exists only in the perception of the individual is of no importance for our purposes; Democritus' physics may be of interest, however, DK 68 B 9. On the relationship between relativism and truth, Woodruff (1999), 303–4, puts forward four potential positions that might have been held by the historical Protagoras: (1) that contradictory opinions are true, (2) that qualifiers such as "to me" and "to you" mean that there is no true conflict between differing opinions, (3) that opposites permeate all objects and us and make us have shifting perceptions, and (4) that truth is complex enough to encompass opposing views if the world is created out of opposing forces. For subjectivism, see Burnyeat (1976), 59–62.

[21] Cf. also DK 80 A 21a = Pl. *Tht.* 167c and 177c–9b. On relativism and Protagoras' role as an educator, Guthrie (1969), 171–3.

> And also, as concerns public affairs, the noble and the shameful, the just and the unjust, the holy and the unholy, whatever each polis conceives and lays down as *nomima* for itself, these are also the truth in each polis, and in these things no individual is wiser than any other nor is polis wiser than polis.

According to Plato, Protagoras holds that whatever the normative moral code of a polis, it is an outgrowth of a unique society rather than the result of an objective governing order. It is easy to underestimate the radical nature of this thesis, but cultural relativism does more than acknowledge that differing societies engage in differing practices, it entails the proposition that the traditional practices of a given society are ethical for it, however disturbing they may be from an etic perspective.

It is clear that this argument made an impact on Plato's Socrates as well. In the *Crito*, Socrates defends himself to Crito for remaining in Athens and suffering the death penalty instead of escaping the polis as a fugitive. To convince his interlocutor of the correctness of his decision, Socrates apostrophizes Athens' *nomoi*. In their imaginary dialogue with him, the laws point to the hypocrisy of Socrates' benefiting from the city all of his life but then not adhering to their justice system. They offer an analogy according to which, like a father, the laws of the city are not on an equal footing with those who observe them and instead require total obedience. Just as a father can strike his son and not be struck – an example of a *nomos* that was by then proverbial, as we shall see – to an even greater degree the polis merits the respect of its citizenry if it strikes them down (50e–1c).[22] Even if the laws mandate what is unjust, as in their decree of death for Socrates, they are no less binding.

In discussions of cultural relativism, the network of *nom-* terms serves as a given society's expression of its own ethical norms, its own justice.[23] Its contingency was voiced by the fourth-century sophist, Lycophron, in his remark that *nomos* is "a guarantor of justice to one another" (Arist. *Pol.* 1280b) but one that held no power to make citizens noble and just. The coincidence of a society's conventions, laws, and customs, on the one hand, and its ethics, on the other, has the potential for volatility in particular in the innovation of *nomoi* or in using the language of habitual

[22] Plato's stress on the necessity of obedience to *nomoi* would have had particular resonance for his fourth-century audience, for whom an important distinction had been made between *psephismata* that were passed by the popular assembly and *nomoi* that were given to a special board of lawgivers, the *nomothetai*, for which, see Ostwald (1986), 520–4. While laws began their lives in the assembly, they were submitted to and ratified by the *nomothetai*, Hansen (1979), which may allow Socrates to avoid obedience to an ignorant Athenian *demos*.

[23] E.g., DK 22 B 44; DK 82 B 11a.30. At Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1129b11–14, justice is obedience to *nomos*.

unjust behavior as *nomos*. In such instances, a tension between popular justice and *nomos* emerges, one that calls into question their identity. Given the exiguous remains of the Presocratic philosophers on the subject, it is necessary to turn to another avenue of intellectual culture, in Athenian drama, to assess its impact.[24]

As a comedy inspired by the "New Learning" revolutionizing science, rhetoric, and ethics, Aristophanes' *Clouds* presents uniquely important evidence of the ethical implications of subjective and cultural relativism. In the comedy, an Athenian father, Strepsiades, works to enroll his son, Pheidippides, in Socrates' philosophical school, "The Thinkery." Pheidippides commences his education with the arrival of two *logoi*, the Better and the Worse, which engage in a spirited rhetorical contest to persuade the new pupil of the necessity of adopting their respective methods. It is noteworthy that when the Worse *logos* starts his pitch, in his very first words he stresses his impact on tradition by revealing that he is called the Worse *logos* by the intellectuals "because first of all I contrived to speak what is the opposite of our *nomoi* and opposite to what is just" (1039–40: ὅτι πρώτιστος ἐπενόησα τοῖσιν νόμοις καὶ ταῖς δίκαις τἀναντί' ἀντιλέξαι).

The structure of the antilogy between the Better and Worse *logos* conjures up Protagoras' much vaunted declaration that there were "two *logoi* opposed to one another on every matter" (DK 80 A 1). But the comedy undermines the interpretation of the claim that Protagoras appears to have made, namely, that these arguments should equally obtain. In the *Clouds*, the Worse *logos* is compromised from its very inception, although it does in the end "win" the debate against its opponent.[25] In any case, the allusion to Protagorean philosophy continues in the reference to the disturbance of *nomos*. Protagoras' position on the equal validity of differing *nomoi* in human societies was deployed by the *Clouds* to challenge the *internal* validity of a polis' customs and its sense of justice. After Pheidippides graduates from the Thinkery, he offers a dramatic example of the disturbing outcomes that can emerge from this philosophy of relativism.

Following his return home, Strepsiades requests that his newly minted *sophos* sing something from the great Simonides or Aeschylus. Pheidippides at first rejects his father's promptings and finally consents to sing something avant-garde, something from Euripides. He sings a tune in which a

[24] It is, however, implicit in Antiphon's *On Truth*, DK 87 B 44.
[25] See Apfel (2011), 53, with bibliography at n. 37.

young man sleeps with his sister – a theme that his father unsurprisingly finds depraved. The argument that follows matures into a violent altercation, and Strepsiades complains after he is beaten by his son, "Nowhere is it customary for a father to suffer this (1420: ἀλλ' οὐδαμοῦ νομίζεται τὸν πατέρα τοῦτο πάσχειν)!" Yet Pheidippides, fresh from the Thinkery, is now equipped with a rhetorical arsenal to combat any opponent and uses this opportunity to display his skills and to justify his abuse of traditional norms.[26] Though we must remain sensitive to the generic deformation of philosophy in Old Comedy, it is clear that the humor from the scenario derives from its lampooning popular sophistic discourse.

The *agon sophias* begins with Pheidippides' picking up the thread on *nomos*: "Was it not a man like you and I who established this *nomos* first, and persuaded the ancients with his speech?"[27] Historicizing *nomos* as a human innovation rather than a divine one puts tension on its ethical mandate and exposes its arbitrary nature.[28] If persuasion of the masses is the measure of ethical norms, then it stands to reason that an individual in the present, such as Pheidippides, might reshape *nomos* with a more persuasive account of human action. The nature of his defense shifts to deflate his father's grievance against him by introducing a *nomos* allowing sons to beat their fathers. Pheidippides bolsters his legislation with the statement that a law that is of recent provenance is not thereby worse, ἧττόν τι δῆτ' ἔξεστι κἀμοὶ καινὸν αὖ τὸ λοιπὸν | θεῖναι νόμον τοῖς υἱέσιν, τοὺς πατέρας ἀντιτύπτειν.[29] The *Clouds* trades precisely on the fact that *nomos* is not hinged upon any objective standard but instead is subject to alteration and thus potentially a threat to popular conceptions of justice.[30] Pheidippides' sophistic legerdemain reveals the problematic status of *nomos* as an ethical determinant – if nothing objective underlies

[26] Prepared for at *Nub.* 904–5, 911–12. Traditional norms are detailed at 961–83, 985–99, 1002–23. The opposition to this is telling, cf. Archidamus at Th. 1.84.3: εὔβουλοι δὲ ἀμαθέστερον τῶν νόμων τῆς ὑπεροψίας παιδευόμενοι ("We are prudent, educated too ignorantly to look down on our *nomoi*.").

[27] *Nub.* 1420–2: οὔκουν ἀνὴρ ὁ τὸν νόμον θεὶς τοῦτον ἦν τὸ πρῶτον | ὥσπερ σὺ κἀγώ, καὶ λέγων ἔπειθε τοὺς παλαιούς;

[28] Dover (1968), ad 1421.

[29] *Nub.* 1423–4: "is it any less permissible for me, in turn, to establish a new *nomos* in the future for sons to strike their fathers in turn?" For the idea that women have to accustom themselves to new behaviors and *nomoi* upon marriage, see Eur. *Med.* 237–40. The collocation καινὸς νόμος is ominous in the mouth of Critias at Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.51, in particular as he was selected as one of the Thirty to restore τοὺς πατρίους νόμους, 2.3.2. Cf. too Aesch. *Eum.* 778, 808; Ar. *Av.* 1038.

[30] The historical contingency of *nomos* is also at stake in the disturbing conclusion drawn by some philosophers on *nomos* as a compromise against anarchy, as evident in DK 88 B 25; Pl. *Resp.* 359a.

convention beyond the passage of time, then moral behavior can be interpreted as fluid.

As has been noted by others, Pheidippides' song contains a provocative intertext – one that is of particular interest for our purposes.[31] The comic moment in which Pheidippides is said to sing a salacious Euripidean ballad on sibling incest, ὡς ἐκίνει | ἀδελφός, ὦ 'λεξίκακε, τὴν ὁμομητρίαν ἀδελφήν (1371–2: "how a brother was screwing, god help me, his sister born from the same mother"), likely refers to Euripides' *Aeolus*. This fragmentary tragedy centered on another father-son debate, in this case, on the (im) morality of incest.[32] The young Macareus had secretly impregnated his maternal sister and needed to persuade his father, Aeolus, of the rectitude of marrying his sons to his daughters. In fact, Macareus does convince him to accept incestuous marriage.[33] The tragedy famously contained the line, "what is shameful, if it does not seem so to those practicing it (τί δ' αἰσχρὸν ἦν μὴ τοῖσι χρωμένοις δοκῇ;)?"[34] As E. R. Dodds notes: "The line understandably created a scandal. It shows just where ethical relativism lands you."[35] Moral norms are under threat, in this case through the language of "use." It is by interweaving this paratragic moment into the *Clouds* that Aristophanes reveals the extent to which morality is subject to revision. It can even be pressed into support for incest. Macareus and Pheidippides both illustrate the drama that results from an awareness of the relativism of cultural practices and the ability to deform traditional morality by the abuse of this realization.[36]

Euripides' *Phoenissae* is equally sensitive to the pressure on traditional ethics from the influence of relativism. A particularly lucid evocation of

[31] Dover (1968), ad 1372, "The play concerned is the *Aiolos*," and he notes its reception in Ar. *Ran.* 1080 and Ov. *Her.* 2. For an insightful discussion of the lost tragedy, see Telò (2010).

[32] Casali (1998), 706 n. 14.

[33] For the hypothesis, see *P. Oxy.* 2457.18–34. That the incest was considered unconventional by Macareus and his father is likely from Eur. frr. 17–19 and 37–8; see Mülke (1996), for its illegality in Athens.

[34] *TrGF* F 19 Kannicht; parodied at Ar. *Ran.* 1475: τί δ' αἰσχρόν, ἢν μὴ τοῖς θεωμένοις δοκῇ; Nestle (1911), 263–4, in the course of arguing for the irrationality of tying Herodotus to a vague "Ionian sophistic" as, e.g., Schwartz (1890), is probably incorrect to argue that τοῖσι χρωμένοις refers not to individuals persons but nations.

[35] Dodds (1951), 187. Telò (2010), 301, "It follows that the legitimization of incest between homometric siblings was expressly imputed in the play not only to filial deception, but also to paternal ineptitude." For *nomos* as the guarantor of the boundaries of right and wrong, Eur. *Hec.* 798–801.

[36] The mutability of law on the principle of relativism is a problem recognized by philosophers, such as the *Anonymous Iamblichi*, DK 89 6, a text that suggests that *nomos* is upheld *kata physin* because men cannot live in communities without it and cannot live alone because of the harshness of their environment. See also the Sisyphus-fragment, DK 88 B 25.5–10.

this occurs in the context of Eteocles' bid for sole power in Thebes. He forestalls his brother Polyneices' claims of unjust treatment and impiety by calling attention to the instability of reference regarding the terms *kalos* and *sophos*: "if to all the same thing were by nature noble and wise, there would be no strife talking out of both sides of its mouth among humans: but as it is nothing is similar or equal for mortals except for names – but this is not the thing itself" (εἰ πᾶσι ταὐτὸν καλὸν ἔφυ σοφόν θ' ἅμα | οὐκ ἦν ἂν ἀμφίλεκτος ἀνθρώποις ἔρις | νῦν δ' οὔθ' ὅμοιον οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἴσον βροτοῖς | πλὴν ὀνόμασιν: τὸ δ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔστιν τόδε).[37] The double-tongued ἀμφίλεκτος is evocative of Protagoras' own professed ability to discuss any subject from a weaker or a stronger position, and it is clear that Eteocles' pronouncement is suggestive of the disturbing ends to which Protagoras' relativism is the means.[38] While Eteocles does not here use the language of *nomos*, this passage remains an important witness to the realization that ethical predicates can have varied but equally valid subjects. For Eteocles, this ultimately authorizes the pursuit of tyranny.[39]

As we have seen, fifth-century intellectual culture reveals a preoccupation with relativism. But while there is, at times, a comprehension of the validity of the diversity of human *nomoi*, relativism is also made to undermine traditional moral dictates against depravity, such as mandates against incest, the abuse of parents, and tyranny. This occurs through the metaethical reflection that cultural norms differ while being equally authoritative, which leads to a rejection of absolutist or objective standards of human action. The corrosion of moral intuitions occurs in each instance through the agency of the individual. Pheidippides, Macareus, and Eteocles each challenge the predominant consensus. Unique to Pheidippides is the explicitness of the impact of this corrosion on the social fabric, as he underscores the all-too-human roots of *nomos* in an individual's ability to persuade others. Evidently, the audience is meant to find such subversion menacing. In light of this, it is telling that even as late

[37] L-M "Dramatic Appendix" T 68 = *Phoen.* 499–502. Nestle (1941), 271, finds this a reproduction of Protagoras' *homo mensura* doctrine, as quoted by Guthrie (1969), 165 n. 3. It is noteworthy that Polyneices' speech in advance of this opposes the "simple *logos* of truth" (469) to the "unjust *logos*" (471).

[38] Mastronarde (1994), ad 499–525, "Both the language and the content of Et.'s speech are meant to associate Et. with the clever young men who used the training of the sophists to discomfit their traditionally minded elders and to justify selfish and aggressive behaviour. The denial of a stable foundation for assigning crucial moral predicates . . . recalls Protagorean relativism."

[39] The recognition of the relativism within value-systems leads to the notion that there is no sense in talking about rightness and wrongness objectively, a position that leads some to act in self-interest, e.g., Ar. *Nub.* 889–1114; Th. 5.105. For self-interest, see Chapter 3.

as Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger is made to praise an obscure and otherwise unknown law according to which no youth could (a) query the rightness or wrongness of the laws and in fact (b) had to affirm them all divine.[40]

The Nomological Marketplace: *Nomos* and Relativism in the *Histories*

Turning to the *Histories*, it has long been recognized that *nomos* and its cognates play a key role: they embrace a wide variety of behaviors and organize human societies into predictable macro-historical agents; similarly, they create identities and polarities both between Greek city-states and between Greece and foreign peoples.[41] Additionally, they tell a diachronic story. *Nomoi* introduce a hermeneutic stance promoting cultural relativism whereby all cultural practices are equal.

Yet, whether or not the *Histories* is engaged in promoting cultural relativism has become a much-debated question. An increasingly prominent position argues that the text does not advance a position of relativism.[42] As an example, Tim Rood holds that "Herodotus' argument about Cambyses' madness does not show that he was a strict cultural relativist. He does not claim that all customs are equally valid, but rather that recognition that one's own perspective on others' customs is culturally determined should lead to tolerance."[43] This position can be addressed if we turn to what is perhaps the most famous passage on cultural relativism in the *Histories*, at the end of the "Madness of Cambyses" *logos*.[44]

[40] *Leg.* 634d7–e4.

[41] For Redfield (1985), 105–6, *nomoi* create symmetries. More recently, Thomas (2000) 102–34, argues that Herodotus demotes environmental factors in favor of *nomos* as an explanatory paradigm.

[42] Arguing against a sophistic *nomos* are Stier (1928), 240; Pohlenz (1937), 85. Several scholars have voiced dissent from the view that Herodotus gives voice to a strong relativism, e.g., Benardete (1969); Humphreys (1987), 212; Apfel (2011), 196.

[43] Rood (2006), 299.

[44] For Cambyses, see Waters (1971), 53–6; Gammie (1986), 180–2; Lateiner (1989), 163–86; Munson (1991); Christ (1994), 180–2, 186–7. The *logos*' relationship to sophistic thought has been long noted, e.g., Schwartz (1890), 11, "id sophistarum arti deberi ne ullo quidem eget argumento." ("No argument is needed to show that it is owed to the art of the sophists.") Modern scholarship has focused intently on this passage as evidence for Herodotean relativism: e.g., Munson (1991), 62, argues, "every sane man's inevitable recognition of an area of sacred customs within his own culture, carries with it an equally compelling inhibition from making fun of, much less interfering with, those of others, whatever these may be and however he may regard them." Thomas (2000), 27, considers 3.38, "suspiciously consistent with contemporary experiments with subjectivism and relativity." Cf. too Ehrenberg (1923), 5; Heinimann (1945), 80–3; Sinclair (1951), 54; Gigante (1956), 109ff.; Evans (1965), 146; Dihle (1981), 60; Redfield

Nomoi in the *Histories* have up to this point represented the set of social behaviors that constitute a given group's ethical framework, a feature of humans that separates them from the animal world.[45] The reign of the Persian king Cambyses in many respects encapsulates the entire problem of Persian kingship, and it is thus of great interest that it is continuously presented as an attack on *nomos*.[46] After his successful conquest of Egypt, Cambyses shifts to an internal war against his Persian and Egyptian subjects and in the process continuously violates the traditions and laws of both peoples.[47] The narrative foregrounds a series of attacks against the king's family, wise advisor, Persian agemates, and finally, his court attendants. These increasingly erratic and under-motivated offenses eventually result in the narrator's diagnosis: "in many such ways he raged against the Persians and the allies" (3.37.1: ὁ μὲν δὴ τοιαῦτα πολλὰ ἐς Πέρσας τε καὶ τοὺς συμμάχους ἐξεμαίνετο).[48] The *logos* continues with an enumeration of the religious impieties the tyrant commits against the Egyptians, which fills out the statement that Cambyses attacked both Persians and their "allies," the Egyptians. Herodotus concludes:

> In every way, then, there are clear indications for me that Cambyses was totally insane. Otherwise, he wouldn't have attempted to mock things sacred and customary (ἱροῖσί τε καὶ νομαίοισι). For if someone were to put a proposition before all men, ordering them to select the noblest *nomoi* for themselves from all *nomoi* (νόμους τοὺς καλλίστους ἐκ τῶν πάντων νόμων), after examining them thoroughly each people would choose those

(1985), 99, 104; Thomas (2000), 103, 126. I am in agreement with much of what Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella make of 38.1, although I do not interpret this in terms of "Ionian science."

[45] In only one case can I find animals possessing *nomoi*, *TrGF* 346 Kannicht. Humans without *nomoi* are almost animals, cf. Theog. 1.54–8 Young.

[46] Benardete (1969), 79, is close to my own position: "As Cambyses shows by his deeds and speech that law may be no more self-evident than crime, he points to the wider problem of πίστις itself." See too Brown (1982).

[47] For which, see A. Lloyd (1988); Immerwahr (1966), 97 n. 57; Munson (1991); Christ (1994), 186–7; Payen (1997), 145.

[48] The emphasis on treating the rejection of justice as a symptom of madness has a parallel in Pl. *Prt.* 323a–b, where all partake of justice unless they are mad; it is possible (though in no way demonstrable) that the stress on Cambyses' insanity is a result of Herodotus' exposure to Protagoras' *homo mensura* doctrine. See Guthrie (1969), 187, "if a man sincerely believes that it is good to steal, then for him, so long as he believes it, it *is* good. But, just as it is worthwhile for a doctor to change a sick man's world by his drugs so that what appears and is to him sour appears and is sweet, so it is worth while for the majority or their appointed representatives, to whom stealing both seems and is bad, to work upon him by persuasion until his view – that is, the truth that is for him – is changed." Cf. too Mansfeld (1981), 45–8, who argues that relativism is designed to bring about consensus through the persuasion of individuals and downplays the importance of subjectivism, 47–8: "Whenever a plurality of persons agree, a common measure has arisen. This intersubjective truth is not independent of those who have agreed to it; it is only valid for them."

> of their own. So, each people observes that by far the noblest are their own *nomoi* (οὕτω νομίζουσι πολλόν τι καλλίστους τοὺς ἑωυτῶν νόμους ἕκαστοι εἶναι). Then it is reasonable that no one other than a madman set about laughing at such things. One can form the conclusion that this is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi* (ὡς δὲ οὕτω νενομίκασι τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόμους οἱ πάντες ἄνθρωποι) from other pieces of evidence and particularly from the following: during his reign, Darius called together those present of the Greeks and asked them for what amount of money they would be willing to eat their fathers after they died. They replied that no amount of money would be enough for them to do this. After this, Darius called those of the Indians called Callatians who *do* eat their parents and asked them, with the Greeks present and learning what was said through an interpreter, for what amount of money they would accept burning their dead fathers with fire. But they shouted loudly and ordered him to refrain from his impiety. So now these are things of settled custom, and rightly it seems to me that Pindar said that "*nomos* is king of all" (οὕτω μέν νυν ταῦτα νενόμισται, καὶ ὀρθῶς μοι δοκέει Πίνδαρος ποιῆσαι, νόμον πάντων βασιλέα φήσας εἶναι). (3.38)

Let us begin by outlining the structure of the argument and then discuss its connection to relativism:[49]

A. Cambyses was totally insane
   - A_1. Otherwise, he wouldn't have attempted to mock things sacred and customary
     - A_2. Each people observes that by far the noblest are their own *nomoi*
   - A_1. Then it is reasonable that no one other than a madman set about laughing at such things

B. This is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi*
   - B_1. During his reign, Darius called together . . . . But they shouted loudly and ordered him to refrain from his impiety
   - B_1. And rightly it seems to me that Pindar said that "*nomos* is king of all"

The thesis that Cambyses was in fact mad comes on the heels of his final outrages against what is sacred and customary. He abused the Persians, opened Egyptian tombs, entered temples, and mocked divine images. Proof of the root of this conduct as madness is provided first by a

[49] See Munson (1991), 57, for an alternative breakdown of this passage, with close attention to Herodotus' metatextual commentary. Apfel (2011), 82–3, argues that 3.38 is the outcome of Herodotus' exposure to diverse human cultures, which she rightly connects to Protagoras, but unpersuasively argues is not an example of relativism.

counterfactual – Cambyses wouldn't have laughed at the sacred and traditional things, as he just has in the temple of Hephaestus, were he not mad. This thesis develops with a further argument: all men consider their own *nomoi* just, a fact that the narrator proves with a hypothetical "nomological marketplace." If a marketplace with the world's *nomoi* existed, each individual would choose his own culture's as best. This latter remark recalls Protagoras' position on social relativism.[50]

Where Herodotus innovates is in the connection of the statement at A_2 that "all men consider their own *nomoi* best," to that of A_1 "no one other than a madman would laugh at (foreign) *nomoi* as Cambyses." Their conjunction merits clarification – why connect the consideration that one's own *nomoi* are best with the position that sober tolerance is the sane response to the diversity of human *nomoi*? This metaethical response to cultural diversity finds no parallel in Protagoras. Yet, by linking these judgments, Herodotus forestalls the potential objection that Cambyses' laughter at Egypt is a valid *Persian* response to alterity. In finding one's own *nomoi* best, the individual is led to transfer this awareness to an appreciation of the *nomoi* of others. Relativism and tolerance are represented as normative responses to diversity. Cambyses, however, fails to draw this conclusion. This is all the more damning since his position as Great King affords him a near-unrivaled vantage point from which to view cultural practices, in a manner akin to the nomological marketplace.

This is further clarified by the historical exemplum from the reign of Darius.[51] The king, like the audience of the *Histories*, sees the dynamics of relativism unfold in the clash between foreign cultures. Darius tests the tenacity of *nomoi* by positioning two cultural norms in opposition to one another, creating a bloodless culture war in miniature. When the stress test fails to sway either the Callatian Indians or the Greeks and ends with a reaffirmation of the supremacy of *nomos*, Darius and the external audience enjoy a double focalization. First, the etic viewpoint affirms the integrity of relativism, by focusing upon the legitimacy of both Greek and Indian burial practices. Cultural relativism holds that there is no objective

[50] On the intellectual overlap of Protagoras and Herodotus, see Apfel (2011), 130–4. Earlier Nestle (1941), 274 n. 36, had argued that Herodotus uses *nomos* in a Protagorean, sophistic context.

[51] Christ (1994), 187–9. Thomas (2000), 125, realizes that there is a debate here, though she does not quite identify it as I do: "So when Herodotus says outright in the tale of Darius' experiment . . . that all people adhere to their own customs, *nomos* is indeed king, he implies some alternative view – *nomos* as opposed to what? To emphasize *nomos* in this period in this way presupposes some controversy, some debate, some alternative. It may be that his insistence was directed at men who thought human culture was determined by environment rather than at thinkers like Hippias or Antiphon who embraced *physis* in a different sense (nature)."

position on which right and wrong traditional practices can be assessed, and the results of Darius' experiment emphasize just this fact.[52] Second, the emic perspective acknowledges the fixity and integrity of cultural norms and traditions for a given society by focalizing the Greek and then Callatian perspectives on burial traditions. The reaction of the Callatians in particular, who practiced a Greek taboo – cannibalism – drives home the validity of the emic vantage point. Not unlike Plato's Protagoras, for whom whatever seems just and fine to each city is just and fine so long as it observes that customarily, the *Histories* reveals a willingness to attribute to a given culture its own ethical coherence.[53]

Returning to Cambyses, we can consider afresh the link between the king's madness and the recognition that all men hold their own *nomoi* as best. In confronting Egypt and its exceptionally myopic cultural practices as a Persian aggressor, Cambyses had already staged a cultural experiment similar to that of Darius. Unlike his successor, however, he did not reach the correct conclusion – a failure that is explained by the symptomatic laughter of madness. Taken as a whole, 3.38 affirms the impossibility of a single Archimedean vantage point from which to assess cultural norms. The influence of cultural relativism as a tool for understanding historical action beyond the confines of the Greek world is not, tellingly, met with an equal interest in that associated form of relativism, subjectivism. One might imagine a Protagorean subjectivist suggesting that Cambyses' reaction was "right for him." The *Histories* grants him no such scope, instead processing the narrative of his reign through the suffering of his victims. As the Pindaric citation stresses, it is communal *nomos*, not the individual, which is supreme. Each society is shaped by its own values, and these values are to be considered appropriate for it. On Humphreys' analysis, "the point would perhaps be, then, that keeping within the bounds of

[52] Baragwanath (2008), 116, with notes on Rood (2006), 298–300. For a different interpretation, see Provencal (2015), 51, who assumes that "the idiosyncratic irrationality of Cambyses' mockery of custom only serves to highlight the universal respect for *nomos* as sacrosanct, the universality of cultural absolutism signifying that *nomos* itself is divine." He cites as support Lateiner (1989), 141, who argues that some *nomoi* in Herodotus appear universal. Yet, where the Androphagoi, who are expressly said to have no *nomos*, fit into this interpretation is unclear. There is no evidence in the text, contra Provencal (2015), 52, that "*nomoi* are relative to and dependent upon *nomos* as a universal and divine principle." With Waters (1971), 99, "There is no instance of νόμος in the sense of overriding principle, a law of nature . . . or as the manifestation of divine control, a θεῖος νόμος . . . Herodotus does not elevate a personified or deified Nomos into a guiding principle".

[53] My position is close to that of de Romilly (1992), 112, "The conclusion that he drew from his discoveries was that one should always display tolerance."

nomos is what matters, regardless of the variation of *nomoi* from one society to the next."[54] In fact, keeping within the bounds of *nomos* appears inevitable; barring madness, "*nomos* is king."[55]

It seems that the example of funerary cannibalism became a *topos* in philosophical treatises on relativism, as the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* makes precisely the same point, but uses the Massagetes as an example of the relativity of values:[56]

> Μασσαγέται δὲ τὼς γονέας κατακόψαντες κατέσθοντι, καὶ τάφος κάλλιστος δοκεῖ ἦμεν ἐν τοῖς τέκνοις τεθάφθαι· ἐν δὲ τᾷ Ἑλλάδι αἴ τις ταῦτα ποιήσαι, ἐξελαθεὶς ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος κακῶς κα ἀποθάνοι ὡς αἰσχρὰ καὶ δεινὰ ποιέων. (2.14)
>
> The Massagetes cut their parents up and eat them, and the seemliest burial is thought by them to be if they are buried within their children; but in Greece if someone were to do these things he would be driven out of Greece and would die terribly as one doing shameful and awful deeds.

The neutrality with which the narrator presents the Callatian Indians' practice of ancestor-ingestion is a regular feature of Herodotus' ethnographic excurses, a fact that confirms his affinity for cultural relativism.[57] For example, in detailing the customs of the savage Taurians, who infamously practiced human sacrifice, Herodotus begins,

[54] Humphreys (1987), 214.

[55] Cf. Thomas (2017), 582, who contrasts Herodotus' "belief in the priority and significance of a society's own laws and customs" with Thucydides' willingness to witness their upheaval. The former Spartan king, Demaratus, echoes this sentiment in even stronger language at 7.104.4–5, where the Spartans have over them a δεσπότης νόμος; [Pl.] *Minos* 317c notes the power of "kingly" *nomos*: τὸ μὲν ὀρθὸν νόμος ἐστὶ βασιλικός, τὸ δὲ μὴ ὀρθὸν οὔ, ὃ δοκεῖ νόμος εἶναι τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν ("that which is right is the kingly *nomos*, not that which is not right, which seems to be a *nomos* to those who do not know"). Nestle (1908), 26, reads this as connected to sophistic teaching from Hippias; my courage fails. The equal validity of cultural practices is matched by the equal validity on wisdom concerning the divine, for which, Munson (2001), 164, who cites 2.3.2 "considering that all men know equally about these things" (νομίζων πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἴσον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπίστασθαι).

[56] See pp. 198, 201. Cf. Nestle (1908), 36; also de Romilly (1992), 113, "the purpose of the author is no longer to preach tolerance. It is to show that there are no such things as objective justice or injustice." The *Dissoi Logoi* does not stress or exclude tolerance as a potential response to cultural relativism. The funerary ritual is recorded at Hdt. 1.126; for a discussion of funerary *nomoi*, see Munson (2001), 167–70. On funerary practices and *nomos*, cf. Pind. *Ol.* 8.78; Soph. *Aj.* 1130; *Ant.* 24, 519.

[57] Munson (2001), 163, notes that cultural relativism and ethical relativism are two separate philosophical concepts, offering monarchic abuse and an implicit disapproval of the oppression of free members of a society as examples of Herodotus' rejection of ethical relativism. Hartog (1988), 256, rightly comments on the neutral tone of Herodotus' voiceprint in his ethnographic narrative descriptions.

> Of these people, the Taurians use the following *nomoi*. They sacrifice to the Maiden shipwrecked people and those of the Greeks whom they seize after putting out to sea, in such a way: they start the sacrifice by striking their head with a club. In fact, some say that they thrust the body down from the cliff (for the shrine is situated on a cliff face) and put their head on a spike; others agree about the head part, however they claim that the body is not thrust down from the cliff, but it is hidden in the earth. (4.103.1–2)

Herodotus' description sets aside revulsion in order to engage with the Taurians on their own terms. His often-dispassionate stance, married as it is to an antiquarian hunger for detail on the gory rite of human sacrifice, reveals no value judgment. Contrast the response of Iphigenia on the same practice in Euripides' tragedy, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*:

> There is no way that Leto, wife of Zeus, | would have given birth to such stupidity. I | judge too that the feast of Tantalus with the gods | is a faithless tale – that they took pleasure in his son's flesh; | but I suppose that these here [the Taurians], because they are man-killers (ἀνθρωποκτόνους), | credit their baseness (τὸ φαῦλον) to the goddess. (386–90)[58]

Iphigenia upholds an objectivism whereby the goddess' norms are the same everywhere and interprets the Taurians as violating these in her name.

By contrast, Herodotus' impartiality gradually instills a hermeneutic stance of assessing each group on its own terms. Even in the rare instances in the text where the narrator explicitly makes a value judgment on *nomos*, this is couched in relative terms. In a discussion of Persian ethnography, for example, the narrator praises two Persian *nomoi* (1.137.1). As Rosaria Vignolo Munson has persuasively argued, these evaluations are best considered as instances of "opinion" rather than the results of an application of an objective standard, and she connects this praise to narratorial approval on limiting emotional excess.[59] Elsewhere, a *nomos* adopted from the Egyptians by Solon is said to be unequivocally "blameless" (2.177.2), as an explanation for its continued use. In the Babylonian ethnography, the "wisest" *nomos*, the marriage market, is part of a subjective judgment (1.196.1: κατὰ γνώμην τὴν ἡμετέρην, "in my opinion"). While a given society has more or less fine practices, these are not absolute, transcultural assessments.

In this last example, unmarried women are brought together and sold, beginning with the most beautiful. The least attractive are then given

[58] Cf. Eur. *Cyc.* 299–301.
[59] Munson (2001), 138–40; cf. too 88–100, 149–72; Apfel (2011), 194–6.

dowries from the funds that have been collected from the wealthy individuals willing to buy their comely wives. This exchange of women and circulation of wealth attends to economic and social inequalities. We happen to know that an obscure philosopher, Phaleas of Chalcedon (believed to antedate Plato), agreed. Aristotle mentions that Phaleas supported the careful regulation of inequality to reduce party strife. He recommended that cities adopt a version of the marriage market – that is, to allow the rich to give dowries but not receive them and to allow the poor to accept but not give them (Arist. *Pol.* 1266b). It is possible that a similar interest in the promotion of equality and social cohesion may underlie Herodotus' judgment. It may also underpin his critique of Babylon's "most shameful custom" (1.199.1): mandatory, one-time temple sex work. In this ritual, beautiful women, we are told, can quickly acquit themselves; however, those less favored in appearance may remain waiting for years to complete their service, in a reversal of the equality of opportunity found in the marriage marketplace. Herodotus' judgments on *nomos*, positive or negative, are rare. The tantalizing connection between Herodotus' Babylon and Phaleas' political philosophical project expose another potential layer to interpreting these – as pointed interventions in debates on civic harmony.

To return to Cambyses, those interpreting the *logos* as ultimately advocating for tolerance are, on balance, correct.[60] But if this argument rejects cultural relativism as the logic behind tolerance, then on what account does tolerance become desirable? If there are absolutes in cultural practices, and if Herodotus might accept that there is an objective integrity to the practice of cremation, as an example, why would tolerance be the response to any behavior that departs from this, rather than education or compulsion? Alternatively, if the text advances an implicit position according to which human understanding is too limited to allow for confidence in conclusions about the integrity of a given norm, this also puts the external audience in the position of relativists, in the understanding that all customs are potentially valid, with no objective viewpoint to adjudicate.

One-Man Rule and Decoupling *Nomos* from *Dike*

On the strength of the juxtaposition of Cambyses' madness and the Greco-Callatian deference to tradition, Thomas concludes, "Herodotus respects

[60] For tolerance and relativism, see Appendix 1.

nomoi whatever their provenance."[61] As is common to fifth-century thinkers, Herodotus does often ally *nomos* to its more abstract companion, justice (*dike*), a fact that goes some way to explaining the reverence that *nomos* commands.[62] The Persians "observe as customary" (1.133.1: νομίζουσι) the honoring of their birthday, and "deem it right" (δικαιεῦσι) to have a greater feast on this day. After Cambyses abuses the corpse of the Egyptian king Amasis, the narrator remarks:[63]

> For the Persians hold as customary (νομίζουσι) that fire is a god. Indeed, burning corpses is not at all a *nomos* for either [Persians or Egyptians]; in the case of the Persians, for the very reason that has been mentioned, since they say that it is not just (δίκαιον) to dispense (νέμειν) the corpse of a man to a god. (3.16.2–3)

In order to introduce a new *nomos*, the Persian jurisconsults first judge that it is "just" (3.31.4: δίκαια). A Spartan famed for his justice, Glaucus, when being asked for the return of a deposit, speciously says that he wishes to do "all that is just" (πᾶν τὸ δίκαιον) and then pledges to use Greek *nomoi* (6.86.β2). In the ominous moments just prior to Plataea, Mardonius refuses to wait for the appropriate Greek sacrifices to turn out positively and instead follows the Persian *nomos*, which does not require sacrifices before battle, "deeming it right" (9.42.1: δικαιεῦντος).

Yet this is not the entire story. In key passages, the apparent logic of 3.38 – that men respect *nomoi* no matter their provenance on the basis of their connection to a society's own justice – is complicated.[64] As we saw above, Persian despotism and imperial domination have the potential to threaten the initially powerful position that *nomos* holds in a society.[65]

[61] Thomas (2000), 133; cf. a similar statement in Herrmann (1967), 124, which contrasts Herodotus' reverence to Thucydides. Immerwahr (1966), 321, is more ambivalent, "while it is clear its effect is primarily in harmony with the world order, there are customs which have a destructive effect upon the peoples that hold them, and on other peoples as well."

[62] Stier (1928), 239, "für νόμος die δίκη synonym gebraucht wird" ("*dike* is used synonymously for *nomos*"), a fact he thinks is misunderstood by interpreters attempting to put Herodotus and sophistic thought in dialogue.

[63] On this passage, see Apfel (2011), 197–8.

[64] Ostwald (1969), 37, "the term [*nomos*] describes not a practice but a belief, opinion, a point of view, or an intellectual attitude, which starts out by being accepted without question by all members of a given group, but is attacked by intellectuals from the second half of the fifth century on as 'mere' conventional belief, foolishly embraced by the ignorant multitude but to be rejected in the light of truer values . . . the term retains its old signification of something regarded as valid by public opinion in general."

[65] In spite of the apparent strong prescriptive power of *nomoi* – which had been proof of the madness of Cambyses for transgressing them – individuals in the *Histories* regularly transgress *nomoi* or what is *nomima*, e.g., 1.9.1; 1.11.3; 1.61.1; 1.144.3; 4.76.1–80.5; 5.42.2; 7.136.2; 7.238.2. Baragwanath

Cambyses, for example, invents ingenious transgressions of both Persian and Egyptian *nomoi*, and his actions are treated as unethical for much of the narrative.[66] However, his position as operating outside of Persian norms loses its force during the course of his reign, in a development that reflects powerfully on the *histor*'s place in the current philosophical debate on the relativity of values and justice.

Cambyses' madness manifests itself in a succession of murders that first take place against his family. He orders the death of his brother, Smerdis, and then his sister; in one variant, he even kills his unborn child.[67] The description of the murder of the king's sister-wife is of particular interest, as it includes, unlike the chronological progression of the death of Smerdis, a narratorial analepsis that nests an account of the king's constitutional position, which led to his marriage to his sister prior to the Egyptian campaign.[68] The analepsis is structured around the chronic inability of the ruler to ally himself to Persian *nomos*, but his status as a transgressor of *nomos* is not upheld.[69]

> He married her in this way. For the Persians were not at all previously accustomed to cohabit with their sisters (οὐδαμῶς γὰρ ἐώθεσαν πρότερον τῇσι ἀδελφεῇσι συνοικέειν Πέρσαι). Cambyses grew lustful for one of his sisters and next, wishing to marry her, since he was contriving to do what was not customary (οὐκ ἐωθότα ἐπενόεε ποιήσειν), he summoned those called royal judges and asked them if there was some *nomos* bidding one who wished to cohabit with his sister (εἴ τις ἐστὶ κελεύων νόμος τὸν βουλόμενον ἀδελφεῇ συνοικέειν). The royal judges are select Persian men who serve up until they die or something unjust is discovered about them. These men decide lawsuits for the Persians and they are expounders of the ancestral laws and everything is referred to them. So then, when Cambyses asked them, they gave him a just (δίκαια) and safe answer, saying that they

(2008), 120, rightly finds that Herodotus "seems more interested in exploring the extent to which *nomoi* do not determine human behaviour."

[66] Despots present an acute threat to *nomos*, e.g., Lateiner (1989), 155.

[67] At 3.32.1 the two accounts of the death of Cambyses' sister-wife – and also of the death of Smerdis – are called διξὸς λόγος, corresponding nicely to the Protagorean "two-fold *logos*." Flower (2006), 279–80, notes the historical improbability of the narrative of Cambyses. For Egypt's acceptance of Cambyses as legitimate pharaoh, see Wasmuth (2021); for an argument on the fictionality of the Apis narrative, see Konstantakos (2016); on the madness of Cambyses as based on an Egyptian legend, see Cruz-Urbibe (2003). For a positive interpretation of his treatment of Egyptian temples, see Agut-Labordère (2005). Ruzicka (2012), 18: "much evidence of various kinds … points instead to Cambyses as concerned with reconciling Egyptians to Persian domination by maintaining and participating in Egyptian practices."

[68] Parallel accounts are found in Ctesias, see *FGrH* 688 F 13 and Strabo 17.1.5. According to Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella 3.31.2, sibling marriage was a common practice in Persia in Herodotus' own time.

[69] For this passage, see Redfield (1985), 117.

> could not discover any *nomos* which orders a brother to cohabit with his sister; however, they had discovered another *nomos*, that it is permitted for the king of the Persians to do whatever he wishes (φάμενοι νόμον οὐδένα ἐξευρίσκειν ὃς κελεύει ἀδελφεῇ συνοικέειν ἀδελφεόν, ἄλλον μέντοι ἐξευρηκέναι νόμον, τῷ βασιλεύοντι Περσέων ἐξεῖναι ποιέειν τὸ ἂν βούληται). In this way they did not break the *nomos* (οὕτω οὔτε τὸν νόμον ἔλυσαν). Since they were afraid of Cambyses, they discovered in addition another *nomos* as an ally to one wanting to marry his sisters, in order that they themselves not die by preserving the *nomos* (ἵνα [τε] μὴ αὐτοὶ ἀπόλωνται τὸν νόμον περιστέλλοντες, παρεξεῦρον ἄλλον νόμον σύμμαχον τῷ θέλοντι γαμέειν ἀδελφεάς). (3.31.2–5)

Incest is a particularly powerful expression of alienation from norms, as this practice provides the foundation for society's categorization of identity and difference.[70] The contravention of this taboo serves to illustrate Cambyses' rivalry with the divine, his acute social estrangement, and his obsession with the self. Motivated by the fact that his desire to marry his sister is "not customary" (οὐκ ἐωθότα), Cambyses approaches Persia's specialized jurisconsults to find a constitutional loophole.[71] Herodotus narrates an additional complication: Persia's legal experts cannot be discovered adjusting *nomos* without being disbarred or worse. This presents a problem, as Persia does not allow incestuous marriages, but neither could the legal experts expect to avoid a gruesome end by upholding Persian *nomos* if they rejected Cambyses' request.[72] Resolution arises from their "discovery" or "invention" (ἐξευρηκέναι) of another *nomos*: "to the ruler of the Persians it is permitted to do whatever he wishes." Cambyses enters seeking a *nomos* to allow one to marry his sister and leaves with a much more comprehensive mandate – whatever the actions of the king, they are embraced under a sweeping law that sanctions them. This *nomos* resolves the Persian jurisconsults' legal paradox, while very carefully avoiding the dismantling of Persian *nomos* against incest (οὔτε τὸν νόμον ἔλυσαν, "nor did they rescind the law"). Cambyses no longer conflicts with *nomos*, given the identification of the ruler with what is custom, law, and tradition, and this results in an uneasy compromise between the destruction of *nomos* and justification of behavior that is contrary to it.

[70] That Herodotus' Persians did not practice incest earlier is clear from 3.31.2. Herodotus is careful to note that she was his sister from both parents 3.31.1. The detail is also found in Ar. *Nub.* 1372, because in Athens, "marriage between children of the same father but different mothers was permitted by law," see Dover (1968) ad loc. For an overview of ideas about incest in ancient Greece, see Wilgaux (2011), 217–30.

[71] Bucci (1975). [72] See the punishment of Sisamnes, 5.25.

The rare collocation ἐξευρηκέναι νόμον (*exeurekenai nomon*) itself may point to this tension. On its own, ἐξευρίσκω refers to "finding out" and "discovering" something amidst a given set of options.[73] In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, the Better Argument asks the Worse how it can possibly defeat a superior position, to which the latter responds, "by finding out novel propositions" (*Nub.* 896: γνώμας καινὰς ἐξευρίσκων). It can also be applied to *nomos*, however, as in Antiphon's *On the Murder of Herodes*. The defendant, Euxitheus, accuses the prosecution of presenting their case against him on the wrong charge in the wrong court and reproaches his prosecutor for "discovering laws" to suit himself, αὐτὸς σεαυτῷ νόμους ἐξευρών (12). This paradoxical phrasing uses "discovery" not in connection with preexisting laws, as the term would normally imply, but with the innovation of laws "for yourself." The notion of individualistic *nomoi* disrupts their usual association with community values. Instead, laws are discovered for the individual. This kind of almost contradictory usage finds a parallel in the English phrase, "being a law unto oneself."[74] In the *Histories*, the terms are also found together in the Candaules-Gyges *logos* in the first transgression of *nomos*, when Candaules suggests that Gyges view his wife naked. Gyges protests, "long ago noble things have been discovered by men . . . and I beg you not to enjoin what is contrary to *nomos*" (1.8.4: πάλαι δὲ τὰ καλὰ ἀνθρώποισι ἐξεύρηται . . . καὶ σέο δέομαι μὴ δέεσθαι ἀνόμων).[75] The ancients' dictum to "look to one's own" is a discovery that is here set in stark contrast with the immoral proposal of Candaules. Similarly, when the Babylonians discover a new *nomos* for liquidity, the narrator glosses it as "lately they have found some other thing: everyone destitute of livelihood prostitutes his daughters" (1.196.5: ἄλλο δέ τι ἐξευρήκασι νεωστὶ . . . πᾶς τις τοῦ δήμου βίου σπανίζων καταπορνεύει τὰ θήλεα τέκνα). These passages provide additional context for the actions of the Persian jurisconsults, who are "finding out a *nomos*," that is innovating and establishing a practice as a custom by fiat. This process undercuts the temporality of custom as something established

[73] Cf. Powell s.v. ἐξευρίσκω, "seek out," "find out," and by extension, "invent."

[74] There need not be a negative association between "discovery" and *nomos*, however, cf. Soph. *Trach.* 1174–8, where Heracles bids his son to discover the finest *nomos*, obedience to a parent (νόμον | κάλλιστον ἐξευρόντα, πειθαρχεῖν πατρί). [Pl.] *Minos* 315a–d, defines *nomos* as the "discovery," ἐξεύρεσις, of "is."

[75] Similarly, Evans (1965), 145, suggests that most *nomoi* have their origins in discoveries made by men of old, pointing to 1.8, "they are the product of ancestral wisdom, discovered apparently by experience and not by divine revelation."

communally and legitimated by time.[76] It is clear that in composing this piece, which occurs, importantly, prior to the invasion of Egypt, Herodotus retrojects the rupture of *nomos* and popular morality into the earliest moments of the reign of Cambyses.[77]

The origins of *nomos* are recorded elsewhere in the *Histories*, and they follow a clear pattern. When the narrative presents the audience with the establishment of a new *nomos*, these are authorized *collectively*. After the Argive defeat at Thyrea, the Argives as a people (Ἀργεῖοι) establish two *nomoi*: to keep their hair shorn and to forbid women to wear gold prior to retaking Thyrea (1.82.7).[78] Simultaneously, the victors in this battle, the Lacedaemonians (Λακεδαιμόνιοι), establish a counter-*nomos* to grow their hair (1.82.8). In a similar manner, the Argives and Aeginetans make a custom (5.88.2: ἔτι τόδε ποιῆσαι νόμον εἶναι παρὰ σφίσι ἑκατέροισι) of wearing brooches twice as large as they had previously, in celebration of their victory against the Athenians and in support of the Athenian women who killed, with their dress pins, the single soldier who had survived the Argive-Aeginetan slaughter. They also collectively observe an embargo against Athenian goods and begin a custom (5.88.2: νόμον) of pouring libations only from their own local wares. The women of Caria impose a *nomos* (1.146.3: νόμον) that forbids their eating with their Ionian husbands. This is in recompense for their husbands' murdering the Carian women's parents, prior husbands, and children.[79] As a general rule, then, the introduction and maintenance of *nomos* is a socially constituted phenomenon. Lawgivers also pass legislation, which might initially appear to ally *nomos* to the individual; however, these figures are in fact presented as conduits of the people and as vehicles for their communal values. Solon, for example, enacts *nomoi* for the Athenians; in this case, the *histor* insists on the importance of the populace in introducing and authorizing his action. First, the "Athenians" en masse request new *nomoi* from Solon (1.29.1: ὃς Ἀθηναίοισι νόμους κελεύσασι ποιήσας, "he had made laws for

[76] This may not suggest that Herodotus disapproves of *nomos* that is discovered – on the contrary, it is clear from Gyges' words that *nomoi* are first considered "discoveries"; what I suggest is that the Persian "discovery" of a *nomos* that allows the ruler to act without a check is a *nomos* that strains the logic of the concept itself. For a discussion of this passage and its relationship to Herodotus' ethnography, see Calame (1986), 82–3.

[77] This passage complicates the assertion of Herrmann (1967), 119 n. 12, "Die Frage der Gerechtigkeit der Nomoi wird nicht erhoben" ("The question of the justice of *nomoi* is not raised.").

[78] Contra Humphreys (1987), 217, *nomos* does not have to not easily change; rather, it must be endorsed by a community. The Argives clearly want to abandon this *nomos* as soon as possible.

[79] Other examples of group action creating *nomoi* for posterity include 2.35.2; 3.48.3; for a smaller group enacting a *nomos*, see 2.147.3–4.

the Athenians who ordered it"), and then the people as a whole agree to obey his *nomoi* "with powerful oaths" (1.29.2: ὁρκίοισι γὰρ μεγάλοισι). The complicity of the collective is obvious and should not be glossed over. So too, the narrative stresses the collective endorsement of Lycurgus as a lawgiver: after his death, the Spartans as a body establish a temple and cultic worship for him (1.65.5).[80] Famously, "the Persians especially admit foreign *nomaia*" (1.135), and the Persian collective is stressed throughout this passage. The portrait that coalesces from the text is that *nomoi* are socially constructed practices, a set of parameters that establish justice and injustice within a given group.

Returning to Cambyses, the *nomos* justifying his incest is in tension with the authorized body of *nomoi* that the Persian jurisconsults are meant to protect. Yet, if we follow the *communis opinio*, "Herodotus never questions the obligations that *nomos* imposes."[81] Indeed, the immediately succeeding episodes on the nomological marketplace and the experiment of Darius would apparently confirm this, were it not for the complications presented by the Persian legal experts' constitutional ruling on Cambyses. This ruling allows the despot to be reintegrated into the fabric of Persian normative behavior, as his actions are now in line with legality and justice, although they contravene what is popularly moral. In crafting this passage, Herodotus moves beyond the position that Cambyses attacks *nomos* and begins to engage with contemporary debates on *nomos* and the philosophical implications of relativism.[82]

[80] At 2.177.2, Amasis establishes the *nomos* of reporting income, a "blameless *nomos*" that Solon brings to Athens, and which "those Athenians continue up to this point to observe as blameless" (τῷ ἐκεῖνοι ἐς <τόδε> αἰεὶ χρέωνται, ἐόντι ἀμώμῳ), again stressing the importance of the body of the people in upholding law, though in this case an individual introduces the *nomos*. There are also cases in which the support of the people is not overtly noted, e.g., 2.136.2, although these are more rare. The divine do not give *nomoi* in the *Histories*, *pace* Evans (1965), 147.

[81] Ostwald (1969), 255, as so often, in contradistinction to Thucydides. This appears to be valid of, e.g., Democritus DK 68 B 248: ὁ νόμος βούλεται μὲν εὐεργετεῖν βίον ἀνθρώπων· δύναται δέ, ὅταν αὐτοὶ βούλωνται πάσχειν εὖ· τοῖσι γὰρ πειθομένοισι τὴν ἰδίην ἀρετὴν ἐνδείκνυται. ("*Nomos* wishes to do a service for men's lives; and it has the power to do so, when they themselves wish to fare well. For to those who are obedient to *nomos* it displays its unique virtue.")

[82] Munson (2001), 171, suggests that for Cambyses "the realization that different peoples have different *nomoi* with roughly the same validity leads to denying the validity of them at all." However, Cambyses represents a more complex response to *nomos* – he attempts to ally himself to it with his marriage, and he never clearly recognizes the validity of *nomos* beyond his own warped conception of it. Rather than suggesting that he is an immoralist, like Callicles – who rejects *nomos*, as Munson (2001), 173 n. 100 – I interpret him as closely allied to a Pheidippides figure, who does not simply want to disregard *nomos* but to change the underlying referents of *nomos* to reflect his own abnormal vision of it.

Observe first that Cambyses' constitutional position is to serve as a kind of criterion of *nomos*.[83] This identification is clearly participating in a contemporary political-philosophical discussion on the problematic relationship of the tyrant to *nomos*. In Euripides' *Suppliants*, the Athenian king Theseus gives a defense of democracy that criticizes tyranny as allowing one man to monopolize *nomos*: "One man rules, having acquired *nomos* for himself: and there is no longer equality" (431–2: κρατεῖ δ' εἷς τὸν νόμον κεκτημένος | αὐτὸς παρ' αὑτῷ: καὶ τόδ' οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἴσον).[84] Theseus prefaces this with "because first of all there are no common *nomoi*" (430–1: ὅπου τὸ μὲν πρώτιστον οὐκ εἰσὶν νόμοι | κοινοί). Theseus' rejection of this constitutional system rests on the fact that it eliminates equality (ἴσον), the popular consensus that forms the foundation of *nomos* as it is so often conceived. In a tyranny, the source of *nomos* resides in the figure of the tyrant himself, which fosters arbitrariness in the application and administration of justice. Equality signifies, by contrast, the universal access that citizens have to the law and to the stability of its referents.[85]

The playwright's fragmentary *Antigone* also fulminates against the identity of the ruler with *nomos*: "It is not fitting to rule, nor ought one be a tyrant without *nomoi*" (*TrGF* F 172.1–2 Kannicht: οὔτ' εἰκὸς ἄρχειν οὔτ' ἐχρῆν ἄνευ νόμων | τύραννον εἶναι). It is clear that this became something of a commonplace, as in the *Prometheus Bound*, the chorus accuses Zeus of taking possession of *justice* for himself, οἶδ' ὅτι τραχὺς καὶ παρ' ἑαυτῷ | τὸ δίκαιον ἔχων Ζεύς (186–7: "I know that Zeus is harsh, making justice his own prerogative"), in a jab at his tyrannical behavior. Private law recurs as a characterization of Zeus' rule, "These are the miseries that come from Zeus' governing with his private *nomoi*; he displays an arrogant temper to the prior divinities" (402–5: ἀμέγαρτα γὰρ τάδε Ζεὺς | ἰδίοις νόμοις κρατύνων | ὑπερήφανον θεοῖς τοῖς | πάρος ἐνδείκνυσιν αἰχμάν), and this cements the status of the new sovereign as a *tyrannos* rather than a

[83] In Presocratic circles, the relationship between *nomos* and justice was emerging as controversial; Antiphon B 44 F A col. I 6–11: Δικα[ιο]σύνη πάντα <τὰ> τῆς πό[λεω]ς νόμιμα ἐν ᾗ ἂν πολι[τεύ]ηταί τις μὴ [παρ]αβαίνειν ("Justice is one not transgressing all the *nomima* of the polis in which one happens to be a citizen"). The definition of justice as not transgressing the laws of one's society was a common one, and here Antiphon uses it to expose the weakness of *nomos* as a standard for behavior.

[84] See Stier (1928), 244.

[85] See Eur. *Supp*. 433–7, for equality's ability to level the playing field in the contest for justice between the wealthy and the poor.

basileus.[86] Again, the source of *nomos* is arrogated by the individual ruler and critiqued.

That Herodotus styles Cambyses' constitutional position on the model of the tyrant comes as no surprise; however, the choice to do so through a justification of incest is provocative. Recall that Pheidippides, in his artful display of New Learning, scandalized his father by performing Euripides' famous anthem to incest in the *Aeolus*.[87] As I noted above, in this tragedy the protagonist, Macareus, infamously advocated incest, which resulted in the deaths of his sister and their unborn child[88] – a request that likely included the oft-parodied line, "what is shameful, if it does not seem so to those practicing it" (F 19: τί δ' αἰσχρὸν ἦν μὴ τοῖσι χρωμένοις δοκῇ;). In the *Frogs*, Aeschylus repeatedly portrays this as shocking and maligns Euripides for introducing incest into the art of tragedy (850: γάμους δ' ἀνοσίους ἐσφέρων ἐς τὴν τέχνην).[89] Pheidippides' decision to sing it suggests that this was thematically associated with the philosophical tradition of the time, and it must be an attack on popular morality. Evidence for relativizing incest also comes from the *Dissoi Logoi*. There, the philosopher argues for the relativity of values on the grounds that Persian men practice incest with their daughters, mothers, and sisters.[90] This is contrasted with the practices of the Greeks, who find these actions morally reprehensible and lawless, αἰσχρὰ καὶ παράνομα (*aischra kai paranoma*).

It is clear that incest was a contested index in the debate on cultural relativism from the supporters of objective ethical norms as well. Opponents of relativism deployed it as an instance of exactly the opposite view, pointing to the *absence* of incest in human societies as an indication of universal *nomoi*. Xenophon recounts a dialogue between Socrates and Hippias on the definition of *nomos*, where Socrates' positive answer holds

[86] Cf. [Aesch.] *PV* 149–51: "For new steersmen hold power on Olympus and with laws that are new Zeus wields power unlawfully; he is now annihilating those who had strength before." See also the chorus at 149–50. Ostwald (1969), 44, "what is regarded as valid and binding under the dispensation of Zeus, the Oceanids seem to say, is in fact something unprecedented and idiosyncratic, enacted without the consent of the governed." Cf. Soph. *Ant*. 821, where the Chorus describes Antigone negatively as αὐτόνομος. For a *community's* positive ἰδίοι νόμοι, Pl. *Leg*. 681b. Ferrill (1987), challenges the notion that Herodotus used the two terms, *tyrannos* and *basileus*, interchangeably, contra Waters (1971), 6.

[87] Pütz (2007), 76.

[88] According to the Egyptian informants on her death, 3.32.4–33.1, Cambyses leaped on top of his sister-wife, killing her and their unborn child.

[89] Cf. also 1081: καὶ μειγνυμένας τοῖσιν ἀδελφοῖς ("and having sex with their brothers").

[90] *Dissoi Logoi* 2.15; cf. pp. 198–9. The custom is in fact expressly forbidden for the Persians in the *Histories* prior to Cambyses. For the Persians and the tradition of incest, cf. Xanthos of Lydia *FGrH* 765 F 31; Eur. *Andr*. 173–7 (on incest as a "barbarian" custom); Str. 4.5.4 and 15.3.20; Plut. *Artax*. 23.2–4; Tert. *Apol*. 9.16; Ath. *Deip*. 5.220c-d.

that *nomos* is (1) whatever is legal in a given city but that (2) universal unwritten *nomoi* also exist, mandating, for example, fear of the gods, requital of benefits, and, suggestively, prohibitions against incest.[91] The historical Hippias was well aware of the diversity of *nomoi*, and thus Xenophon's incarnation of the philosopher fittingly draws attention to the fact that this is not a divine *nomos*, because it is transgressed.[92] This leads Socrates to counter that natural punishments follow inevitably from the transgression of divine *nomoi*; for example, children born from incestuous couplings are unhealthy. The Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* makes an identical statement on the objectivity of morality regarding incest, remarking that in all serious tragedy, "when they lead in the Thyesteses or some Oedipuses or Macareuses having intercourse in secret with their sisters, are they not seen as willingly affixing the penalty of death upon themselves as a judgment for their sins?"[93] Although in Herodotus' own time Persians practiced such intermarriage, historicizing this phenomenon in the reign of Cambyses allows the audience of the *Histories* to view its origins as outside of Persian custom and tradition and to assess Cambyses as a "Macareus."

In the context of the discussion sketched above, it is perhaps intelligible that Herodotus crafts the despot Cambyses along lines that trace questions of incest and then segues into a discussion on the relativity of values. By making Cambyses the arbiter of *nomos*, the *Histories* dramatizes the fraying relationship between *nomos*, popular morality, and justice in Persia, where subjectivism – or the notion that what seems right to the individual is right, independent of societal norms – reigns in the form of the Great

[91] 4.4.20: οὐκοῦν καὶ μήτε γονέας παισὶ μίγνυσθαι μήτε παῖδας γονεῦσιν ("and that parents not have sex with their children, nor children with their parents").

[92] 4.4.21: ὅτι, ἔφη, αἰσθάνομαί τινας παραβαίνοντας αὐτόν ("because," he said, "I perceive that some transgress it"). Nestle (1908), 25, rightly sees the connection between 3.31 and this passage in the *Memorabilia*, though his judgment on Xenophon is unnecessarily harsh: "Xenophon . . . leider mit sehr geringem Verständnis für die darin behandelte Frage wiedergegeben hat." ("Xenophon has, unfortunately, described the question treated therein with very little understanding.") Cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 5.1.10, where fear and *nomos* prevent incest: ἐθελούσιον γάρ, ἔφη, ἐστί, καὶ ἐρᾷ ἕκαστος ὧν ἂν βούληται: αὐτίκ', ἔφη, οὐκ ἐρᾷ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφῆς, ἄλλος δὲ ταύτης, οὐδὲ πατὴρ θυγατρός, ἄλλος δὲ ταύτης: καὶ γὰρ φόβος καὶ νόμος ἱκανὸς ἔρωτα κωλύειν ("'For it is voluntary,' he said, 'and each one desires whom he wishes; a brother does not desire his sister, but another desires her; nor does a father desire his daughter, but another desires her. For fear and a sufficiently strong *nomos* prevent this desire.'"). The same sentiment is found in Pl. *Leg.* 8.838a-b. At Eur. *Her.* 1314–17, Theseus explains that even the divine slip into error and that incest – against *nomos* – is one of the ways that this occurs; finally, the author of the Derveni papyrus makes an elaborate case for excusing Zeus' incest at col. 26.

[93] *Leg.* 838c: ὅταν ἢ Θυέστας ἢ τινας Οἰδίποδας εἰσάγωσιν, ἢ Μακαρέας τινὰς ἀδελφαῖς μειχθέντας λαθραίως, ὀφθέντας δὲ ἑτοίμως θάνατον αὑτοῖς ἐπιτιθέντας δίκην τῆς ἁμαρτίας;

King.[94] The particular focus on incest as *nomos*, which is immediately followed by a mandate of cultural relativism, raises the question: does *nomos* remain "king of all" in the context of the perversion of popular morality? The epitaph on Cambyses' madness suggests otherwise. The *Histories* continually represents the actions of the ruler as an assault, rather than jarringly integrating him into the frame of tradition, custom, and law, as the Persian jurisconsults do. Accordingly, in the process of an endorsement of cultural relativism, the *Histories* subtly critiques Persian subjectivism. The narrative maintains the importance of the social body as the arbiter of *nomos*, even in a society dominated by the individual.

The interpretation that Cambyses exemplifies the tension in *nomos* and popular morality finds additional support in the context of Herodotus' quotation of Pindar, which unites two previously opposed elements of the narrative, νόμος (*nomos*) and βασιλεύς (*basileus*).[95] The gnomic statement from the premier fifth-century melic poet is often thought to confer weight on the judgment that Cambyses was mad due to the universal human practice of considering one's own *nomoi* just. Yet, Herodotus' inclusion of the verse is not simply ornamental; on the contrary, read in light of what remains of Pindar's F 169a, it reveals a deeper engagement with Pindaric poetics.[96]

What may initially appear a gnomic statement in the *Histories* is revealed as quite a novel thesis in Pindar: *Nomos*, ruler of all, governs the following paradoxical phrase, ἄγει δικαιῶν τὸ βιαιότατον | ὑπερτάτᾳ χειρί, "*Nomos* leads, deeming just what is most violent with the highest hand." Here, *nomos* is metaphorically represented as a monarch ruling with the utmost power and deeming what is the pitch of violence just. *Nomos* as monarchic is a vivid and astonishing image. Fifth-century political slogans in both aristocracies and democracies touted *nomos* as the opposition to one-man

[94] Lateiner (1989), 153, "More unsettling than Persian disregard of reason and justice are the frightening caricatures of justice that the kings perpetrate." For instances of Persian "justice," see 154. Benardete (1969), 4–6, anticipates this argument, noting that the Persian king's attempts at balance create a mockery of *dike*.

[95] For Herodotus' engagement with this quote, see Kingsley (2018).

[96] Schröder (1917), 199, is classic: "Man darf vielleicht daraus schließen, daß auch Herodot das Wort schon als ein 'geflügeltes' zitiert, ohne sich das Gedicht, das ihm ja noch vollständig vorlag, durchzulesen." ("One can perhaps conclude from this that Herodotus has also cited this as a 'winged' word, without reading the entire poem, which was still completely available to him.") More recent is West (2004), 84; (2007), 114. Its afterlife is very long, but important are Pl. *Gorg.* 484b4; *Prt.* 337d; *Leg.* 690b–c, 714e–15a, 889e–90a; Ar. *Rh.* 1406a; Plut. *Mor.* 780c7; Plut. *Vit. Demetr.* 42.8.3; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 75,2; Ael. Arist. *Against Plato, In Defence of Rhetoric* 45.52–3 Dindorf; Celsus *True Word* 5.34.40; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.29.181.4.

rule.[97] Their ambiguous coalition in Pindar manifests in a further paradox, in that its actions result in "justifying what is most violent," δικαιῶν τὸ βιαιότατον.[98] The tension between the two concepts – justice and violence – is an obvious and disturbing one. Pindar supports this proposition with a proof, τεκμαίρομαι (*tekmairomai*), "I cite as evidence," and the rest of the extant song relates Heracles' violent theft of the cattle of Geryon and, then in greater detail, his seizure of the man-eating horses of the Thracian king Diomedes.[99] In each instance, Heracles' actions are charged in ethically negative ways: the theft of the cattle is explicitly ἀπριάτας, "without purchase money," a condemnable act.[100] Diomedes' struggle against Heracles is carefully qualified as one of honorable opposition, οὐ κό]ρῳ ἀλλ' ἀρετᾷ ("not with insolence, but with virtue"), ruling out the potential traditional mythographic reading that has Heracles justly punish Diomedes. The scholiast explains, "Not with *hybris*, but virtue. For not disregarding one's possessions is the act of a brave man, not of a violent one. And Heracles was unjust to take (them) away."[101] Heracles is poised in opposition to the monarch; his entrance is a violent intrusion, a "path of force in the night" (ν]υκτὶ βίας ὁδόν). It is clear that he has thrown one of the horses' grooms into the stall from the sound of crunching bones, a grim presage of the fate that awaits Diomedes according to tradition. While in another variant Diomedes was killed for feeding men to his horses, in this vignette it is Heracles who perpetrates the injustice.[102] Finally, the remainder of what is intelligible recounts Heracles' theft of the mares and completion of his labor. There is a clear logic to fragment 169a as we have it: Pindar opposes a violent Heracles to Geryon and then

[97] Eur. *Supp*. 429–34. See Stier (1928), 243f.; Giorgini (1993), 33; McGlew (1993), 86.

[98] Schröder (1917), 196, "rechtfertigend das Gewalttätigste" ("justifying the most violent act"); Bowra (1964), 75, "rendering just"; Ostwald (1965), 117, "brings on . . . what is most violent and makes it just"; Galinksy (1972), 34, "chastising," "bringing to justice." While Pavese (1968), 57, initially found that "'to justify' is patently impossible," at (1993), 146, he agrees with the *communis opinio*, for which see Lloyd-Jones (1972), 49, "δικαιοῦν is a factitive; its form suggests that it means 'makes just.'"

[99] For parallels of Heracles as violent and just, cf. Pavese (1993), 146, who notes *Hymn. Hom. Heracles* 6 and Peisandros, *Herakleia*, 10B. In early epic, questions of justice and injustice quietly operate in the background and problematize the heroism of Heracles, cf. Hom. *Il.* 5.403–4; *Od.* 11.565–627, 21.22–38. For a genealogy of Heracles' actions, see Amphitryon at Hes. [*Sc.*] 11–12, 82. Antecedent and presumably important for Pindar is Stesichorus' negative portrait of Heracles and heroizing of Geryon in the fragmentary *Geryoneis*, cf. F 12 col. I 7–8, II 6–7.

[100] LSJ[9] s.v. ἀπριάτην. Contrast Aesch. *Herakleidai* F 74.5–6, where Heracles travels to take the cattle of *unjust* herdsmen (βοτῆράς τ' ἀδίκους κτείνας) and from the triple-bodied Geryon.

[101] Σ line 10 (suppl. Lobel): οὐκ ἐπὶ ὕβρει, ἀλλ' ἀρετῆς ἕνεκα. τὸ γὰρ [τὰ ἑαυτοῦ μὴ προ]ίεσθαι ἀνδρείου (ἐστίν) [] ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑβριστ[οῦ. Ἡρα]κλῆς δ(ὲ) ἠδ[ί]κει [ἀφελό]μενος.

[102] For the death of the grooms, Apollod. *Bibl. Epit*. 2.5.8; Quint. Smyrn. 6.270–7; Philostr. *Imag*. 2.25.

Diomedes and, in doing so, forcible seizure to valiant opposition. The initial injustice of Heracles is amply narrated; its justification, if it ever existed, where a monarchic *Nomos* sanctified Heracles, has been lost. Kevin Crotty well observes of Pindar's practice here that "rather than correct tradition, to bring it into line with the customary distinctions of moral categories, he reflects rather on the power of *nomos* to make men hold contradictory beliefs, so that they revere what they condemn and condemn behavior (Diomedes') which they elsewhere commend."[103]

The nomological marketplace immediately precedes the fragment of Pindar in the *Histories*, and thus it is of interest that it is reminiscent of another fragment of Pindar: ἄλλα δ' ἄλλοισιν νόμιμα, σφετέραν δ' αἰνεῖ δίκαν ἕκαστος (215a).[104] Without additional context, it is difficult to draw too many conclusions; however, it is strikingly similar in content to Herodotus' relativizing statements here on the variability of *nomos* and its validity for each social body. Herodotus uses relativism as a foil for explaining the abnormality of Cambyses – this is a king who defies human nature.[105] Noteworthy too is Herodotus' ἄλλοισι τεκμηρίοισι ("among other proofs"), which transitions into a historical exemplum from the reign of Darius. This evokes Pindar's own τεκμαίρομαι | ἔργοισιν ("I cite as evidence | the deeds") in 169a.4–5, introducing as it does Heracles' injustice against Geryon and Diomedes.[106]

If we ignore the Pindaric hypotext, the quotation could be interpreted as a gnomic statement illustrating the easy resistance of *nomos* to hegemonic force. That is, Herodotus would juxtapose kingship and *nomos* in the final analysis to illustrate the triumph of the latter over the former and to hint at the reestablishment of normativity following the reign of Cambyses. Yet what is distinctive to Cambyses' rule is his ability to justify his attacks on popular morality as instantiations of *nomos*. In this sense, the reference to Pindar activates a network of meanings – on the disturbing and ambiguous power of *nomos* as a force in the justification of violence.

[103] Crotty (1982), 106.

[104] Rutherford (2001), 338, translates: "Different people have different customs and each man praises his own justice"; also found in Σ in Hom. *Il.* 2.400; Artem. *Oneir.* 4.2, (p. 243 Pack). Noted by Schröder (1917), 199; followed by Stier (1928), 228, 239; and Gigante (1956), 112, who connects it to Aesch. *Sept.* 1070–1: καὶ πόλις ἄλλως | ἄλλοτ' ἐπαινεῖ τὰ δίκαια. ("the polis praises different things at different times as just") Cf. also Pl. *Tht.* 168c.

[105] For which, see Otanes at 3.80.4: τὸ δὲ ὑπεναντίον τούτου ἐς τοὺς πολιήτας πέφυκε ("but he is by nature the opposite of this towards his citizens").

[106] Similarly, Gigante (1956), 113, observes: "è inevitabile pensare che Erodoto abbia non soltanto data la sua interpretazione, ma anche che l'abbia contrapposta al taciuto contesto pindarico." ("One inevitably thinks that Herodotus not only offered his own interpretation, but also contrasted it with the unspoken Pindaric context.").

The historical narrative of one-man rule in Persia continues to develop the dynamic whereby *nomos* and its relationship to popular morality are called into question. Following the death of Cambyses and the conspiracy of the Magi, the narrative turns to the famous Constitutional Debate, during which three speakers in succession address the merits and defects of democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. In doing so, they present a fifth-century political-philosophical *tour de force*.[107] The first speaker, Otanes, speaks in support of democracy, specifically calling attention to one-man rule as a constitutional form that outrages Persian tradition. As has been noted, his encomium of democracy takes the form of a postmortem on the reign of Cambyses.[108] Otanes' strongest argument for the move to a participatory form of government is his assertion that the institution of monarchy has inherent deficiencies:

> κῶς δ' ἂν εἴη χρῆμα κατηρτημένον μουναρχίη, τῇ ἔξεστι ἀνευθύνῳ ποιέειν τὰ βούλεται; καὶ γὰρ ἂν τὸν ἄριστον ἀνδρῶν πάντων στάντα ἐς ταύτην τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκτὸς τῶν ἐωθότων νοημάτων στήσειε. (3.80.3)
>
> How can monarchy be a properly regulated thing in a system where it is permitted for the monarch to do what he wishes with no accounting for it? For even if one were to set the best of all men in this constitutional system, still it would put him outside of all customary thoughts.

Otanes identifies a structural error within monarchy and in doing so obliquely critiques the verdict of the legal exegetes on royal *nomos*, that "the king has the right to do whatever he wishes" (τῷ βασιλεύοντι Περσέων ἐξεῖναι ποιέειν τὸ ἂν βούληται), in the same language, τῇ ἔξεστι ἀνευθύνῳ ποιέειν τὰ βούλεται ("where it is permitted for the monarch to do what he wishes with no accounting for it"). His critical reading of this *nomos* is evident through the addition of ἀνεύθυνος (*aneuthynos*), literally, "not capable of being straightened";[109] it is a democratic *terminus technicus* associated with a critique of tyranny, in that the ruler is not subject to the checks that are in place for keeping democratic

[107] Important bibliography on the debate are Maass (1887); Schwartz (1891), 12–13; Nestle (1908), 29–34; Aly (1929); Stroheker (1953–4); Apffel (1957); Erbse (1960–1); Podlecki (1966); Connor (1971); Lasserre (1976); Lanza (1977); Evans (1981); Lateiner (1984), (1989), 163–71; Pelling (2002), 123–58. For a lucid discussion of the history of the interpretation of this debate, see Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella loc. cit. It has its roots in Pindar *Pyth.* 2.86–8, where within each of the three major constitutional forms (*nomoi*), the straight-talking man thrives. According to Diogenes Laertius, Protagoras wrote a work (the first of those we know) entitled Περὶ πολιτείας, DK 80 A 1.55.

[108] Pelling (2002), 133–4.

[109] It occurs only here in the *Histories* and is unattested before it.

officials "straight." In his endorsement of *isonomie* at the end of his speech, Otanes also introduces its antithesis, ὑπεύθυνος (*hypeuthynos*), "liable to give an account of one's administration of office" and draws attention to the problematic nature of allowing an individual to be a law unto himself.[110] So too, in the *Persians*, Aeschylus' Atossa says of Xerxes that he is "not liable to give an account to the polis" (213: οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει). For Otanes, this constitutional flaw is compounded by a structural one in human nature: *phthonos* is an innate feature of man. Compounded by the *hybris* that kingship breeds, monarchy is a system that consistently puts man "outside customary thoughts," ἐκτὸς τῶν ἐωθότων νοημάτων, thus corrupting the individual from the inside out.[111] Otanes' speech again touches upon the abnormal behavior of Cambyses, who had approached the Persian jurisconsults requesting a *nomos* for incest, "because he was contriving to do what was not customary" ὅτι οὐκ ἐωθότα ἐπενόεε ποιήσειν. This judgment treats Cambyses' incestuous desire as an outgrowth of the disease of one-man rule, which in Persia disrupts the individual's relationship to *nomos* while at the same time identifying him with it.

In a rising crescendo of reproaches against monarchy, Otanes lodges his greatest criticism in an echo of the narrator, that the king "disturbs ancestral customs," νόμαιά τε κινέει πάτρια (3.80.5).[112] He then opposes the fairest name, "equality under the law" (ἰσονομίη) to the excesses of monarchy. Equality under the law mandates liability in office (ὑπεύθυνον δὲ ἀρχὴν) and removes the potential for any individual to subsume the power of law. Otanes' use of *isonomie* in this context, instead of the more obvious opposition to tyranny, *demokratia*, requires explanation.[113] After all, on three separate occasions, the *Histories* does refer explicitly to democracy. In the debate between Miltiades and Histaeus on whether the Ionians should leave their position and abandon the Persians under Darius' command in Scythia, Histiaeus is able to prevail by threatening the

[110] Cf. Aesch. *Choeph*. 715; [Aesch.] *PV* 324.

[111] For *hybris* and the Constitutional Debate, see Fisher (1991), 127–8, 346–9. With Pelling (2002), 135, "it is particularly the illogical, contrary character of monarchy that Otanes stresses." Tying one's actions to the contents of thought anticipates in important respects the critiques that Democritus and Plato will make of egoism and its negative effect on the individual's inner well-being, for which, see Nill (1985).

[112] Schwartz (1891), 23, juxtaposes this passage with Eur. *Suppl*. 429f. Evans (1981), 82, suggests similarities with the monarch of [Aesch.] *PV*. See Lateiner (1989), 140–4, for the instances in which tyrants disturb ancestral customs.

[113] Stier (1928), 234, sees a connection between the statement and the scholion of the tyrannicides, ἰσονόμους τ'Ἀθήνας ἐποιησάτην ("they made Athens equal under the law").

future dissolution of their tyrannies and the establishment of more popular democratic constitutions (4.137.2). In a moment of historical irony, after the Ionian revolt – itself the product of the same Histiaeus' machinations – the Persian Mardonius demolishes the Ionian tyrannies and installs democracies in their respective poleis (6.43.3). Finally, at the conclusion of the courting of Agariste episode, Cleisthenes is said to be the outcome of the marriage and the originator of the Athenian democracy (6.131.1).

In the middle of the twentieth century, Gregory Vlastos argued forcefully for *isonomia* as the popular term for democracy before *demokratia* came into vogue, using Otanes' terminology as primary evidence.[114] Given the later instances in the *Histories* in which democracy was referred to as such, Vlastos argued as an "analyst" that the Constitutional Debate's composition preceded Books 4 and 6 and thus Herodotus' knowledge of the terms *demokratia* and *demokrateomai* necessarily came later. The analyst position is, however, vitiated on the basis of arbitrariness, as there is no firm evidence and no consensus on when any book of the *Histories* was written.[115] More persuasive is the interpretation that the reference to *isonomie* is tailored to Otanes as a speaker; it is a proleptic look at the opposition of tyranny to a broader set of isonomic Greek constitutional forms, including "mixed" constitutions such as Sparta; and perhaps also a demonstration of the way in which Otanes is not fully versed in the language or the reality of democracy.[116]

This usage, then, is comprehensible when considered in light of the opposition that Otanes is making. In the speech, Persian monarchy is structurally flawed due to the tension between the monarch who acts as a *nomos* unto himself while also rejecting ancestral *nomos*. Otanes dismisses this constitutional form for its flawed nomological basis and rhetorically drives this home by defining its opposition as *isonomie*. "Equality before the law" curtails individualist legality more appropriately than *demokratia*.[117] *Isonomie* is a particularly effective opposition to monarchy given the

[114] Vlastos (1953). Brannan (1969), 432–3 and Kinzl (1978), 120, 124, both argue that Otanes does not refer to democracy. Cartledge (2007), 158, interprets Otanes as guarding against the potentially negative connotations of the term *demokratia* as "the dictatorship of the proletariat." Lateiner (1989), 185, writing on *isonomia* affirms, "Otanes' proposal best promotes individual autonomy within a political context."

[115] On the lack of consensus among the analysts, see Lateiner (1989), 5.

[116] Pelling (2002), 137–8. A more critical view of Otanes' political vision is found in Thompson (1994), 72.

[117] For an excellent discussion that differs from my own, see Lateiner (1989), 185–6. On the meaning of *isonomie*, cf. Vlastos (1953); Hansen (1989); Ostwald (1969); Giraudeau (1984); Farrar (1988); Raaflaub (2002).

system of private law developed by the jurisconsults for Cambyses. Otanes reasserts the force of traditional Persian morality in his critique of the legislation allowing the king to do as he wishes and in his affirmation of the king as an assaulter of *nomaia*.

In the final speech, in support of kingship, Darius obliquely concludes with an answer to Otanes' condemnation of monarchy but rejects his assessment in a shrewd *peritrope*.[118]

> ἔχω τοίνυν γνώμην ἡμέας ἐλευθερωθέντας διὰ ἕνα ἄνδρα τὸ τοιοῦτο περιστέλλειν, χωρίς τε τούτου πατρίους νόμους μὴ λύειν ἔχοντας εὖ· οὐ γὰρ ἄμεινον (3.82.5)
>
> Moreover, I offer my opinion that since we were freed by one man we should support this system – and apart from this, that we should not dissolve our ancestral *nomoi* that are sound. For it is not better.

Darius calls upon tradition too, by appealing to the first Persian King, Cyrus. Cyrus had made himself monarch in place of the Median Astyages and thereby established hereditary Persian kingship – reason enough for the institution to persist in the tense moments following the Magian uprising against Persian rule. Just as Otanes had alluded to the Persian jurisconsults, in order to critique them, so too Darius echoes their language. The verb περιστέλλειν (*peristellein*) is the same as that used by the legal experts in the context of their *justification* of their new *nomos*: οὕτω οὔτε τὸν νόμον ἔλυσαν δείσαντες <τε> Καμβύσεα, ἵνα [τε] μὴ αὐτοὶ ἀπόλωνται τὸν νόμον περιστέλλοντες παρεξεῦρον ἄλλον νόμον σύμμαχον (3.31.5: "In this way they did not break the *nomos*, and since they were afraid of Cambyses, in order that they themselves not die by preserving the *nomos*, they discovered in addition another *nomos* as an ally").[119] Darius' second injunction, not to "dissolve the ancestral *nomoi*" (πατρίους νόμους μὴ λύειν) of monarchy also corresponds to the jurisconsults' desire to maintain Persian *nomos* so as not to suffer punishment from Cambyses, οὕτω οὔτε τὸν νόμον ἔλυσαν.[120] Darius' speech subtly recodes

[118] Darius does not directly address Otanes' problems with monarchy, see, e.g., Stroheker (1953–4), 386; Thompson (1996), 76.

[119] Cf. Eur. *Med.* 582–3, on the *sophos*: γλώσσῃ γὰρ αὐχῶν τἄδικ' εὖ περιστελεῖν | τολμᾷ πανουργεῖν. ("For, confident that he can dress up well what is unjust with his tongue, he dares to act unscrupulously") Maass (1887), 594 n. 2, on this passage, "Der Dichter bewegt sich also auch hier in der metaphorischen Terminologie der grossen Sophisten." ("Also here the poet uses the metaphorical terminology of the great sophists.").

[120] For similar anxiety on the dissolution of *nomoi*, see 1.29.1; 6.106.3. Evans (1981), 83, finds Darius' argument, "peculiarly Herodotean."

the language of this justification of the regal *nomos* into a broader endorsement of kingship on the basis of tradition and conservatism.[121] He revises Otanes' νόμαια πάτρια ("ancestral customs"), translating them from traditional moral behavior into traditional regal power. The naturalization of monarchy as Persian tradition places those in opposition to it in the position of disturbing *nomos*. It is a shrewd rebuttal of Otanes' statement.[122] Through the juxtaposition of the two Persian grandees and the ultimate success of Darius' reading of Persian ancestral *nomos*, the narrative again thematizes a rift between custom, tradition, law, and popular morality.

In the epilogue to this Debate, the impasse reached by Otanes and Darius is reconfirmed. The defeated Otanes announces his intention to withdraw himself from consideration for the kingship, provided that he and his line remain outside of this rule. After the conspirators all agree to these terms, the mimetic dialogue breaks, and the narrator mischievously concludes, "Even now this house alone of the Persians continues to be free and is ruled only as much as it wishes, if it does not transgress the *nomoi* of the Persians (3.83.3: νόμους οὐκ ὑπερβαίνουσα τοὺς Περσέων)."[123] After these speeches, one wonders: whose *nomoi*? Is Otanes focalized, for whom kingship is antithetical to *nomos*? Or Darius, who successfully defines Persian *nomos* as kingship?[124] The narrative's denouement plays its final note on just this ambiguity, leaving the tension between royal *nomos* and Persian tradition unresolved.[125]

[121] Erbse (1992), 57–8, notes the tension in Darius' response with regard to Persian tradition. It is clear that conservatism in the face of the mercurial changes of *nomos* was a desideratum, cf. the *Anonymous Iamblichi*, DK 89 B 6.1–7.16. The thoughtful recoding of the previous speeches occurs at the level of almost Prodicus-like care with language, where Darius refers not to a τύραννος but μούναρχος, as Nestle (1908), 31, observes.

[122] With Pelling (2002), 45, "the narrative itself has suggested that these 'traditions' could not so blandly be assumed to 'be good ones,' not after Cambyses, not we would think after Otanes' speech." Cf. too Stroheker (1953–4), 396. Differently, Evans (1961), 111, treats Cyrus as a just lawgiver in the vein of Solon and Lycurgus on the strength of this passage; Redfield (1985), 116, "The hereditary *nomos* of the Persians is monarchy (3.82.5), whereas the Greeks enjoy free institutions." Similar commentary is found in Waters (1971), 98.

[123] Pelling (2002), 145–6, cautiously ties this into Darius' statement that Cyrus "freed" the Persians. For the wise man as not beholden to the laws, Democritus, DK 68 A 166; Antiphon B 44, *passim*.

[124] The democracy spurned motif arises again at 3.142.3, with Maiandrius' attempt to resign his rule of Samos and establish *isonomie* because of his understanding of his fellow citizens as "alike," ἀνδρῶν ὁμοίων, contrary to Polycrates; it is of note that the Persian general sent on the expedition against Maiandrius is Otanes, 3.141. The equality of the citizens underpins Athenagoras' criticism of the would-be oligarchs in Syracuse, who do not want to be counted as equal under the law (ἰσονομεῖσθαι) with the masses, Th. 6.38.5.

[125] This section is an expansion of arguments found in Kingsley (2018). Schlosser (2020), 69–74, has come to some similar conclusions.

It is instructive to compare the differing identifications of *nomos* that we find in the speeches of Otanes and Darius with another Constitutional Debate, that between Pericles and Alcibiades in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In the course of Xenophon's argument that Socrates did not corrupt Critias and Alcibiades, nor incite them to their later excesses, Xenophon recounts their initial companionship with Socrates. This companionship, we are warned, was always already subordinate to the goal of their eventual political hegemony. An example of this is given in the form of Alcibiades' eristic dialogue with the first man of Athens, Pericles. The youthful Alcibiades begins by questioning Pericles on the definition of *nomos*, a topic of philosophical importance, as we have seen. Pericles gives the rather bland response that *nomos* is identical to the people's legislative acts in the assembly, "for all these are *nomoi* that the majority after coming together and making a scrutiny of them, ordained, indicating through them what one ought and ought not do (1.2.42)." After Pericles is made to agree that the outcome of law is τἀγαθά ("what is good"), Alcibiades sets out to refine this definition by questioning the importance of the majority to *nomos*: "But if, as happens under an oligarchy, not the majority, but a minority (ὀλίγοι) meet and enact rules of conduct, what are these (1.2.43)?" Alcibiades presses the implications of this definition of *nomos* for a non-democratic polity. Forced to modify his statement, Pericles gives an answer not unlike that of a Protagoras, whereby all ruling legislative bodies pass *nomoi*. The dialogue continues:

> κἂν τύραννος οὖν κρατῶν τῆς πόλεως γράψῃ τοῖς πολίταις ἃ χρὴ ποιεῖν, καὶ ταῦτα νόμος ἐστί; καὶ ὅσα τύραννος ἄρχων, φάναι, γράφει, καὶ ταῦτα νόμος καλεῖται. βία δέ, φάναι, καὶ ἀνομία τί ἐστιν, ὦ Περίκλεις; ἆρ' οὐχ ὅταν ὁ κρείττων τὸν ἧττω μὴ πείσας, ἀλλὰ βιασάμενος, ἀναγκάσῃ ποιεῖν ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῷ δοκῇ; ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, φάναι τὸν Περικλέα. καὶ ὅσα ἄρα τύραννος μὴ πείσας τοὺς πολίτας ἀναγκάζει ποιεῖν γράφων, ἀνομία ἐστί; δοκεῖ μοι, φάναι τὸν Περικλέα· ἀνατίθεμαι γὰρ τὸ ὅσα τύραννος μὴ πείσας γράφει νόμον εἶναι. (1.2.43–4)
>
> [Alcibiades:] "So, then, even if a tyrant who rules over the city prescribes what the citizens ought to do, are these things *nomos* as well?" And he [Pericles] said, "whatever a ruling tyrant prescribes is also called a *nomos*." "But," he responded, "what is force and lawlessness, Pericles? Is it not when the stronger party compels the weaker party, not by persuasion but by force, to do whatever seems good to him?" "I certainly think so," said Pericles. "Consequently, whatever a tyrant compels his citizens to do, not by persuasion, but by prescription, is it lawlessness?" "I think so," said

> Pericles. "For I retract the position that whatever a tyrant prescribes, unless through persuasion, is *nomos*."

Pericles initially expands his definition to include the variety of constitutional forms that his interlocutor confronts him with, identifying *nomos* with the generic head of state. Alcibiades draws out the flaw in this argument by raising tyranny as a limiting case study, which is by definition a constitutional form that governs by force rather than persuasion. The association of *nomos* with convention remains strong, and this calls into question the legitimacy of Pericles' position; on his reading, the compulsory edicts of a tyrant would have the same legal force as those passed by persuasion in a democratic assembly. The tyrant dismantles tradition, and this ultimately forces Pericles to withdraw his assessment of the definition of *nomos* to emphasize again the importance of its status as socially supported. As a constitutional form, tyranny is ultimately recognized as antithetical to the establishment and maintenance of *nomos*. The sophistic nature of the discussion is explicitly flagged by Pericles, who tells Alcibiades "on such things we exercised our ingenuity and devised as those you seem to me now to preoccupy yourself with" (1.2.46).

Xenophon's recounting of the discussion between Pericles and Alcibiades, if historically improbable, remains a valuable witness to the contested nature of *nomos*, continuing into the early fourth century.[126] More importantly, it resonates with the issues debated in Herodotus' Constitutional Debate. The position of the ruler in relation to *nomos* was evidently one of importance. Yet the conclusion of Alcibiades, Pericles, and Otanes, that the tyrant who rules by force is at odds with *nomos*, is one that the Persian conspirators ultimately reject when they side with Darius and reinstitute Persian monarchical rule. Darius is able to turn the tables on Otanes by identifying *nomos* not with Persian norms that are being transgressed by the ruler but with the ancestral tradition of monarchy, which the seven conspirators themselves are putting under threat by questioning its efficacy.[127] Like Pheidippides after his time in the

[126] Bandini and Dorion (2000), ccxl–cclii, address the problematic dating of the *Memorabilia*, noting that dating divides scholars into unitarians and analysts. Kahn (1996), 30, suggests that it was begun during Xenophon's exile and continued into the 360s, following Lesky (1957–8), 468; Delebecque (1957), 221–35, 477–95, also sees two main periods of composition, the first for Books 1–2 (381 BCE) and the second for 3–4 (355/54 BCE). Bandini and Dorion (2000), ccli, disagree with this conclusion, and argue that there is nothing keeping Books 1–2 from being written at the same late date as 3–4.

[127] Conveniently overlooking Herodotus' ethnographic comment that the Persians above all men adopt foreign *nomaia*, 1.135.

"Thinkery," Darius weaponizes *nomos*. In the latter's case, it elides a critique of monarchy as ethically corrosive. One-man rule in Persia adapts itself to a logic whereby the unjust actions of the Great King are naturalized as cultural tradition. As fifth-century philosophical debates did, so too does the text dramatize the fraying of justice's relationship to *nomos*.[128]

The Project of Empire and Justice

The separation of *nomos* from considerations of justice continues to evolve beyond the reign of Cambyses, through the exploration of the Persian Empire's role in the suffocation of local identities. Persian expansion threatens individual societies' customs, traditions, and laws, through the imposition of its own *nomoi*. The apparently simple calculus of 3.38, whereby *nomos* is king of all, is vexed yet again through the confrontation of *nomoi* within an imperial structure. It is clear from the start of the Persian imperialist project that foreign *nomoi* will suffer. The *histor* singles out Babylon's "wisest" *nomos*, the marriage auction, for a long and encomiastic description. His concluding statement reveals, however, that this is not a custom that exists any longer – this *was* Babylon's best custom, though the narrator only draws attention to this at the end of his description:

> ὁ μέν νυν κάλλιστος νόμος οὗτός σφι ἦν, οὐ μέντοι νῦν γε διατελέει ἐών, ἄλλο δέ τι ἐξευρήκασι νεωστὶ γενέσθαι [ἵνα μὴ ἀδικοῖεν αὐτὰς μηδ' εἰς ἑτέραν πόλιν ἄγωνται]. ἐπείτε γὰρ ἁλόντες ἐκακώθησαν καὶ οἰκοφθορήθησαν, πᾶς τις τοῦ δήμου βίου σπανίζων καταπορνεύει τὰ θήλεα τέκνα. (1.196.5)
>
> Now their finest custom was this; however, it does not continue nowadays, but lately they have discovered something new. For, after they were seized, maltreated, and had their resources ruined, every member of the people in need of a livelihood prostitutes his female children.

Herodotus is careful to emphasize that the destruction of this custom is a result of the Persian imperialist project, and in this way the ethnography represents not just a synchronic portrait of the cultural landscape of Babylon but a diachronic one that draws out the social cost of Persian

[128] Schwartz (1891), 12, aptly concludes his discussion of Deioces by stating that for Herodotus, who on his reading has likely borrowed this episode from a sophistic treatise, "per ipsam iustitiam libertas in dominationem mutari possit" ("freedom can be changed to domination through justice itself").

hegemony. Likewise, Herodotus' elaboration of Egyptian *nomos* is painstaking in its detail, a fact that throws into relief the corruption of these traditions that will occur after Cambyses' conquest. That the extinction of individual Greek autonomy is at stake in the Greco-Persian Wars is evident, for example, in the forced establishment of democracies in Ionia by Mardonius (6.43.3). This is even more clear at the end of the *Histories*, where Xerxes communicates through his Macedonian mouthpiece, Alexander, a message on coming to terms with Persia. Athens will not only receive as gifts from Persia additional land and temples but do so, "while being ruled by its own *nomoi*" (ἐόντες αὐτόνομοι).[129] Xerxes' words are intended to allay a real anxiety, namely, the suppression of local *nomoi*. By contrast, the Persians' imperial reach makes them the most willing of all peoples to adopt the *nomoi* of others (1.135); however, they do so on their own terms.

The attack on indigenous *nomoi* that Persian rule represents is perhaps most forcefully demonstrated during a Persian embassy to Macedonia, to the king Amyntas and this same Alexander.[130] The deputation seeks earth and water, the standard symbols of political submission, which Amyntas freely gives. Yet these symbols take on a new dimension during an elaborate banquet that tests Macedonian compliance, as the Persians say to Amyntas:

> ξεῖνε Μακεδών, ἡμῖν νόμος ἐστὶ τοῖσι Πέρσῃσι, ἐπεὰν δεῖπνον προτιθώμεθα μέγα, τότε καὶ τὰς παλλακὰς καὶ τὰς κουριδίας γυναῖκας ἐσάγεσθαι παρέδρους. σύ νυν, ἐπεί περ προθύμως μὲν ἐδέξαο, μεγάλως δὲ ξεινίζεις, διδοῖς τε βασιλέϊ Δαρείῳ γῆν τε καὶ ὕδωρ, ἕπεο νόμῳ τῷ ἡμετέρῳ. εἶπε πρὸς ταῦτα Ἀμύντης· ὦ Πέρσαι, νόμος μὲν ἡμῖν γέ ἐστι οὐκ οὕτος, ἀλλὰ κεχωρίσθαι ἄνδρας γυναικῶν· ἐπείτε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐόντες δεσπόται προσχρηίζετε τούτων, παρέσται ὑμῖν καὶ ταῦτα. (5.18.2–3)
>
> "Macedonian friend, we Persians have a *nomos*: whenever we put forward a large dinner, then we bring in our concubines and wives to sit alongside us. You now, since you have received us eagerly and entertained us lavishly and are giving earth and water to king Darius, follow our *nomos*." And Amyntas said in response: "Persians, this is not our *nomos*, but to have men and women kept apart. But since you who are our masters request it, these things will be yours as well."

[129] 8.140.2. The term is quite rare in the *Histories* and used only once elsewhere, of the Medes prior to the reign of Deioces, 1.96.1, where Deioces practices justice to entice the Medes from autonomy.

[130] For this passage, see Scaife (1989); Borza (1990); Badian (1994); Fearn (2007), 98–127. Dewald (1981), 97–8, discusses the threat to family.

Although differing *nomoi* are equally valid, imperial expansion undermines this.[131] The logic of empire is here set in stark terms. The embassy, functioning metonymically as the Great King (δεσπόται), claims to enforce the *nomos* of Persia on the basis of its political supremacy.[132] The natural consequent of earth and water is presented, therefore, as cultural subordination. Again, the Persians use the power of *nomos*, their own, to sanction unethical behavior among the Macedonians. Macedon's loss of autonomy – in this case, with respect to traditional sympotic and sexual practices – suggests that in the context of its domination, Persian *nomos* is king of all.[133] Amyntas' forced acceptance (ἀναγκαζόμενος) of foreign custom represents one reaction to Persian domination. Immediately after this submission, Amyntas' son, Alexander, a "youth," νέος (*neos*), "lacking experience of evils," κακῶν ἀπαθής, presents an alternative one. Unable to endure the insult, he sends his father away and, through a theatrical ruse, massacres the embassy. In doing so, at least momentarily he reasserts the authority of Macedonian *nomos*.[134] Through a series of bribes and intermarriages, Alexander eventually reintegrates the Macedonians into the good favor of the Persians;[135] nonetheless, his rejection of the forced imposition of a foreign norm remains a powerful statement of resistance to cultural imperialism.[136] Amyntas and Alexander represent two opposing responses of a subject population to Persian cultural imperialism, without resolving the conflict.

[131] This would have resonated with the Athenian imposition of *nomos* on their "allies," for which, see Ar. *Av.* 143–7, 1035–45, 1202–5, 1344–57; similarly, Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 16–18, complains that the allies are made slaves through their enforced use of Athenian courts.

[132] In fact, they move beyond cultural domination and begin to display the negative quality characteristic of Greek tyrants and Persian monarchs – sexual rapacity – this transgresses both Persian and Macedonian *nomos*.

[133] See Scaife (1989), 132–7, who picks up Alexander's association with the clash of cultures; at 133 he well notes that this passage illustrates the "relative nature of νόμος." Fearn (2007), 104, 101, rightly finds that, "The opening dialogue … is structured around opposing *nomoi*," although his interpretation of what this means differs markedly from my own.

[134] A different interpretation is found in Fearn (2007), 103–5, for whom Alexander's actions are not the reestablishment of *nomoi*, "Though the focus on the narrative appears to be on the opposed *nomoi* of Macedonians … and the Persians in their treatment of women … other details serve to confuse the picture and suggest that Macedonian conventions may themselves be tyrannical." He finds Alexander's marriage of his sister to the Persians, 104, "the culmination of his own implicit submission to the Persian *nomoi*." For *nomos* as the guarantor of justice in the event of a violation of guest-friendship, Eur. *Hec.* 802–5.

[135] The irony is that he is more intertwined with Persia as a result, e.g., Dewald (1981), 98. For the historical backdrop to this episode, see Harrison (2019).

[136] Cf. 2.79.1; 4.76.1; 4.80.5.

Parallel to the ambiguous position of *nomos* for the subjects of Persia is the assessment of abstract justice.[137] In the course of the Persian invasion of mainland Greece, Xerxes engages in an extended dialogue with his "wise advisor," Artabanus, on the brevity and brutishness of life, on the prospect of Persian success against Hellas, and the dangers presented by the sea and the land. Artabanus turns to the enlistment of the Ionians among the Persian forces, recounting their conquest by Cyrus and their close relationship to Athens, their fathers (τοὺς πατέρας). In his rhetorical push to gain Xerxes' assent to leave them behind, Artabanus relies upon an argument based on justice and kinship:

> ἢ γὰρ σφέας, ἢν ἕπωνται, δεῖ ἀδικωτάτους γίνεσθαι καταδουλουμένους τὴν μητρόπολιν, ἢ δικαιοτάτους συνελευθεροῦντας. ἀδικώτατοι μέν νυν γινόμενοι οὐδὲν κέρδος μέγα ἡμῖν προσβάλλουσι, δικαιότατοι δὲ γινόμενοι οἷοί τε δηλήσασθαι μεγάλως τὴν σὴν στρατιὴν γίνονται. (7.51.2–3)
>
> For, if they follow you, either they must become the most unjust of men by enslaving their mother city or the most just by joining in freeing it. Now by becoming the most unjust of men they effect no great gain for us, but by becoming the most just they can damage your army greatly.

At the battle of Salamis, the Ionians do prove themselves loyal, and presumably unjust, by warring against the Athenians. However, Artabanus' speech identifies a key weakness in the Persian force and rightly presages the rhetorical thrust of Themistocles' plea to the Ionians following the battle of Artemisium. Themistocles inscribes the stone faces in the region with words that correspond closely to Artabanus': "Ionian men, you do not do what is just by waging a war against your fathers and enslaving Greece" (8.22.1: ἄνδρες Ἴωνες, οὐ ποιέετε δίκαια ἐπὶ τοὺς πατέρας στρατευόμενοι καὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα καταδουλούμενοι). It is the perception of an Ionian revolt from Persia that leads Xerxes to end his naval campaign against Greece; his fears that the Ionians might side with the mainland Greeks and suggest the destruction of the bridges at the Hellespont, or that they themselves would do it, led to his retreat to Asia.[138] And as the Greek audience would well know, the revolt of the Ionians during the battle of Mycale decisively ended the Persian naval threat to Greece. Artabanus'

[137] For the pressure on justice from the sophists, see de Romilly (1992), 111–33.

[138] 8.97.1. Cf. Hdt. 9.103.2. Commenting on this passage, Macan finds this the moment in which the Ionians "threw off their allegiance to Persia."

cultural fluency in Greek colonialism manifests in his awareness of the dual danger of allowing Ionia to march against her putative mother-city.[139]

Xerxes responds to Artabanus' warning in kind, stressing the justice of the Ionians, but recalls the historical lesson of Scythia. As has already been narrated twice, Darius' disastrous campaign only escaped total annihilation because of the intervention of the Ionian tyrants. Xerxes offers the tyrants' decisive support of Persia in this crucial moment as an example of Ionia's fidelity to the imperial power. Importantly, he identifies obedience as their justice, "they gave us justice and loyalty and nothing at all thankless" (7.52.1: οἳ δὲ δικαιοσύνην καὶ πιστότητα ἐνέδωκαν, ἄχαρι δὲ οὐδέν). By analogy, the Great King suggests that the Persians now have nothing to fear from the Ionians due to this test of their caliber. Appropriately, Xerxes reads "Ionian tyrants" as "the Ionians," displaying an inability to discern the difference between the ruler and his subjects.[140] Ionian justice, on this reading, is precisely their rejection of the Athenian claim in favor of Persia.[141]

As has often been noted, Herodotus creates alternative narratives that allow the reader to choose a variant; similarly, he presents alternative positions on justice in relation to imperialism.[142] In crafting the opposing focalizations, which in fact simply speak past one another, the text reinforces the destabilized referents for terms such as *dikaiosyne* and *nomos*. Where imperialism is involved a confusion of values can occur through the manipulation of language.

Nomos and Imperialism

As I have argued above, the historical narrative engages with the ethical impact of relativism and its potential for destabilizing popular morality from *nomos* and, at times, *dike*. By juxtaposing popular tradition and revisionary values prompted by the Persian ruler and the Persian imperial project, the text dramatizes this philosophical problem as a historical one

[139] Th. 6.82.4, for the Athenian reception of this act during the Peloponnesian War; for its relation to Herodotus' portrait of Ionia, see Thomas (2004), 31–41.

[140] For Xerxes' identification of his pleasure as the motivation of his subjects, see 7.8.δ1.

[141] Thomas (2004), *passim*, discusses the tradition of Ionia in the *Histories* in the context of the later Athenian empire. Artabanus' assessment of the injustice of Ionians' siding with Persians would have been provocative to read in light of later revolts from Athenian hegemony and appeals to Persia, see Luraghi (2018). Cf. 3.19.2 and the Phoenician refusal to sail against Carthage and Cambyses' acceptance of their reasoning.

[142] Lateiner (1989), 76–90; Grethlein (2009), 200, suggests that these display differing uses of the past, which is not at odds with my focus on differing uses of ethical norms.

with its roots in domination, both internal and external to Persian rule. These two narrative strands – tyrannical and imperial – intersect at a key moment prior to Xerxes' invasion, in the council called to introduce the campaign against Greece.

We are informed that from the start of his reign Xerxes was not at all eager to move against Greece and that the decision to invade was made after a long series of prods from interested parties.[143] A catalog of aristocrats lend their persuasive force, beginning and ending with Xerxes' cousin Mardonius, who was himself motivated by a private desire to have Greece as a satrapy. Mardonius argues for the invasion on the grounds of vengeance owed to the Athenians and Eretrians for their unjust participation in the Ionian Revolt, as well as on the basis of the bounty of the Greek mainland; the Aleuadae, kings of Thessaly, come to offer their assistance on the ground; the exiled Peisistratids too persuade Xerxes with promises of support and information; and an Athenian oracle-monger, Onomacritus, recites select oracles of Musaeus favorable to a Persian invasion. The unified front of these speeches eventually works upon Xerxes, and he assents to the offensive. The narrative stresses that the Great King *is persuaded*, making him the passive recipient of the rhetorical tactics of court politics, first by Mardonius, χρόνῳ δὲ κατεργάσατό τε καὶ ἀνέπεισε Ξέρξην ὥστε ποιέειν ταῦτα. συνέλαβε γὰρ καὶ ἄλλα οἱ σύμμαχα γενόμενα ἐς τὸ πείθεσθαι Ξέρξην (7.6.1: "in time he prevailed on and convinced Xerxes to do these things. For other allies combined with him to persuade Xerxes") and then by the intervention of the foreigners Mardonius had engineered to be present, ὡς δὲ ἀνεγνώσθη Ξέρξης στρατεύεσθαι ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα (7.7: "so Xerxes was convinced to war against Greece"). That Xerxes is presented as a passive figure is confirmed by the later words of his wise advisor, Artabanus, who likens the king's decision to attack Greece to the behavior of the sea: calm by its own nature but whipped into frenzy by the winds.[144] Analogously, the company of interested parties keeps Xerxes from his initial reluctance.

Following his decision to invade, Xerxes holds a council to set out his plans for moving against Greece and, allegedly, to learn the opinion of his fellow Persian elites. The Council Scene is a meticulously articulated tableau. It elaborates the aetiology of the Greco-Persian Wars and as such unfolds metonymically to reflect upon the question driving the *Histories* as a whole. Xerxes' speech begins not with strategy but with his motivation for moving against the Hellenes,

[143] On the plurality of causes spurring Xerxes, see Apfel (2011), 179–81. [144] 7.16.α1.

> ἄνδρες Πέρσαι, οὔτ' αὐτὸς κατηγήσομαι νόμον τόνδε ἐν ὑμῖν τιθείς, παραδεξάμενός τε αὐτῷ χρήσομαι. ὡς γὰρ ἐγὼ πυνθάνομαι τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, οὐδαμά κω ἠτρεμίσαμεν, ἐπείτε παρελάβομεν τὴν ἡγεμονίην τήνδε παρὰ Μήδων, Κύρου κατελόντος Ἀστυάγεα· ἀλλὰ θεός τε οὕτω ἄγει καὶ αὐτοῖσι ἡμῖν πολλὰ ἐπέπουσι συμφέρεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἄμεινον. (7.8.α1)
>
> Men of Persia, I do not lead the way in establishing this *nomos* among you – but having inherited it, I will make use of it. For, as I understand from our elders, up to the present we have not at all kept still since we took this hegemony from the Medes, when Cyrus dethroned Astyages. But a god leads in this way and when we attend to many things it turns out for the better.

The standard interpretation sees Xerxes as rightly "reading" Persian history as it preceded him. So, according to Joseph Skinner, "To explain the rise of Persia it is necessary to understand Persian manners and customs – of which the overarching *nomos* of expansion from which Xerxes *was ultimately unable to escape* is arguably the most important."[145] From this perspective, Xerxes is not inventing a *nomos* but describing an existing one within Persia.[146] Similarly, Emily Baragwanath emphasizes the accuracy of Xerxes' assessment in this passage, "the king lays striking emphasis on his respect for *nomos* and plays down the relevance of his personal views (7.8α.1). Xerxes emerges not as a victim of personal lusts, but as a figure whose decisions are influenced above all by his understanding of the past."[147] His self-presentation certainly does suggest this reading and is reinforced by his succeeding statement that immediately upon inheriting

[145] Skinner (2012), 245, with my italics. Cf. Lateiner (1989), 181, "Herodotus presents Xerxes' real freedom of choice as somehow limited metaphysically by fate and his tragic destiny, but most importantly by his status and Persian *νόμοι*, from which any concept of international justice is absent." See also Raaflaub (2002).

[146] Often noted as constituted by Persian πολυπραγμοσύνη ("meddlesomeness") and πλεονεξία ("cupidity"), e.g., Scardino (2007), 351. For human involvement in this *nomos*, see Evans (1991), 26, "An ancestral *nomos* directed the Persians always to push on and maintain the momentum of expansion. Xerxes thought that they were led by a god, but he was wrong: *nomoi* in the *Histories* evolve on the human, not the divine level, and the *nomos* that brought Persia her empire was based on deliberate choice quite as much as any other custom. Xerxes' conviction that the *nomos* of expansionism had divine sanction was myopic. It was a symptom of blindness." It is noteworthy that Aesch. *Pers*. does not use *nomos* aetiologically or at all.

[147] Baragwanath (2008), 243. She continues, 244, "Even as they [the external audience] sense the limited and rather misguided nature of an interpretation that chooses these men's careers to prove the wisdom of active conquest (for their respective attempts were by no means wholly successful), the carefully reasoned character of Xerxes' stance – which is even based on Herodotean-style enquiry – is conspicuous." For a similar view, see Evans (1961), 110; Immerwahr (1966), 321–2; Scardino (2007), 350–5; Zali (2015), 151–2.

the throne he began to consider how not to fall short of his ancestors (7.8.α2).[148] Yet, interpreting Xerxes as a reliable *histor* invites comparison with what he narrates, and it is immediately clear that his motivation to invade is much more complex than he reveals.[149] His passivity in arriving at this resolution is muted; instead, the *nomos* of expansion and his emphasis on his historical understanding present the king as bound to conquer Greece by tradition.[150] Rather than identifying Xerxes as one compelled by historical sensibility to war, the narrative was careful to stress the effortful machinery of the Persian court. Notably, none of their arguments in favor of the offensive brought *nomos* to bear on the question of invasion; Xerxes appears to revise his motivation in stride and to translate the chorus of his confidantes into the more rhetorically expedient *nomos*.

It might be objected that Xerxes' reluctance about the choice to invade was specific to Greece and not a pause or a check on expansionism itself. Recall, however, that Xerxes inherits two planned campaigns from his father, Darius. One against Egypt, which had only recently revolted, and another against Greece, in response to Athens' attack on Sardis (7.1–7.2.1). It is the expectation of a two-pronged invasion by Darius that leads to the excursus on his selection of Xerxes as successor to the throne. When the expectation of invasions is frustrated by Darius' death, Xerxes is against expansionism into Greece and for the reintegration of Egypt (7.5.5), which is a restoration of territory rather than an extension of it. The initial parallelism of the assaults on Greece and Egypt becomes even weaker in the narration of Xerxes' campaign against Egypt, which is

[148] Scholars have been tempted into reading this as a narratorial position, e.g., Scardino (2007), 350. Closest to my interpretation is Fornara (1971), 88–9, "The task is not to render intelligible to the Greeks the cause of Persian attack. It is to explain the cancerous nature of imperialism; to show how inevitably *moral corruption* is entailed by it" (my italics). I agree with Grethlein (2009), 213, in his general point that "Xerxes' attitude to history is crooked and highly problematical."

[149] For Xerxes as a historian, see Christ (1994); Grethlein (2009); Branscombe (2013). The opposition of true and alleged motivation in the context of a Persian imperial mission is observed by the king of the Ethiopians at 3.21.2.

[150] For the *nomos* of imperialism, see Fornara (1971), 88–9; Raaflaub (2002), 174–6; Gigante (1956), 121–2, "La potenza violenta è in Erodoto attributo distintivo del *nomos* dei Barbari. Di questo *nomos* Serse pone le basi negli avi e la prima radice nella divinità (questo indiamento è tipicamente sofistico)." ("Violent power is in Herodotus a distinctive attribute of the *nomos* of the barbarians. Of this *nomos*, Xerxes places the foundation in ancestors and the primary origin in the divine (this union is typically sophistic)." For this passage, see Pohlenz (1937), 124. Evans (1965), 146: "But Xerxes goes on to imply that Heaven gave this *nomos* its imprimatur." Dihle (1962), 217, is probably correct to note that the speech of Xerxes, in its emphasis on Feindschaft, "enmity," is indebted to sophistic discussions on the sense and use of laws; he compares it with Glaucon at Pl. *Resp*. 358d–61d.

reduced to a single circumstantial participle after the fact, "now after subjecting them" (7.7: τούτους μέν νυν καταστρεψάμενος). The subsequent confrontation between Xerxes and Artabanus on whether or not to march against the Greeks, after Xerxes has been convinced to do so, turns on a polar opposition of Persian motion versus rest.[151] In his address to the Persians, Xerxes highlights Persia's unwillingness to keep still (7.8.α1: οὐδαμά κω ἠτρεμίσαμεν) and states that the god "leads" (ἄγει) their marches. The distinction between expansionism into Greece and the resubjugation of Egypt is made clear in what follows, in Xerxes' interpretation of his offensive against Greece as his first act of adding power to the Persian Empire. The motif of motion versus rest continues in Artabanus' opposition of destructive haste to constructive waiting (7.10.ζ). It is notable that Xerxes responds with the astonishing pronouncement that "if we will keep quiet, they (i.e., the Greeks) will not" (7.11.2: εἰ ἡμεῖς ἡσυχίην ἄξομεν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκεῖνοι). When the Great King has been convinced of the folly of his errand by Artabanus, his order to the Persians is to "be at rest" (7.13.3: ἥσυχοι ἔστε). Finally, as noted earlier, the analogy that Artabanus uses to describe the conduct of Xerxes refers to him as a naturally calm sea, disturbed by winds (7.16.α1). The thread uniting the march into Greece with expansionism is importantly distinct, then, from Xerxes' punitive expedition back into Egypt. Once the project of invasion into Greece has been abandoned, it is expansionism itself that is checked, given the stress on Persian motionlessness, quiet, and rest. This harks back to Cyrus' ill-fated invasion of the Massagetes. Tomyris, its queen, bids Cyrus to cease his "haste" in the marked polyptoton, παῦσαι σπεύδων τὰ σπεύδεις (1.206.1), while recognizing that he prefers anything to "rest" (1.206.2: ἀλλὰ πάντως μᾶλλον ἢ δι' ἡσυχίης).

How, then, are we to interpret Xerxes' oratorical strategy in his first speech? First, *nomos* bound to imperialism elides considerations of popular justice and injustice. Indeed, Xerxes treats vengeance against Athens and Eretria as almost an afterthought and immediately subsumes the two into a broader plan to attack Greece.[152] Appropriately for these ballooning ambitions, he envisions enslaving the guilty as well as the guiltless, οὕτω οἵ τε ἡμῖν αἴτιοι ἔξουσι δούλιον ζυγὸν οἵ τε ἀναίτιοι (7.8.γ3: "so both the

[151] See Clarke (2018), 272–87, on the geographical themes of stability and mobility.

[152] 7.7.α2, φροντίζων δὲ εὑρίσκω ἅμα μὲν κῦδος ἡμῖν προσγινόμενον χώρην τε τῆς νῦν ἐκτήμεθα οὐκ ἐλάσσονα οὐδὲ φλαυροτέρην παμφορωτέρην δέ, ἅμα δὲ τιμωρίην τε καὶ τίσιν γινομένην ("upon reflection I find that glory accrues to us and a land no smaller nor poorer than the land we now possess, but more fertile, and at the same time comes vengeance and retribution"), with Darbo-Peschanski (1987), 50–1.

guilty and guiltless will bear a yoke of enslavement"), in a turn of phrase that rivals Cambyses in its departure from popular morality.[153] Indeed, a passage that commentators often juxtapose with Xerxes' appeal to *nomos* is the Athenian imperial bid for the necessity of *physis* (ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαίας) as the motive force for their attack against the Melians.[154] Thucydides' Athenians infamously assert their independence from popular morality by stating that their imperialist impulse (ἂν κρατῇ, ἄρχειν) is justified by *nomos*:

> καὶ ἡμεῖς οὔτε θέντες τὸν νόμον οὔτε κειμένῳ πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι, ὄντα δὲ παραλαβόντες καὶ ἐσόμενον ἐς αἰεὶ καταλείψοντες χρώμεθα αὐτῷ, εἰδότες καὶ ὑμᾶς ἂν καὶ ἄλλους ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ δυνάμει ἡμῖν γενομένους δρῶντας ἂν ταὐτό. (5.105.2)
>
> We neither established this *nomos* nor are we the first to use it once established; we received it already in existence and use it and will leave it after us for all time. We know that you and others coming into our same power would do the same.

The Athenians blur the distinction between *nomos* and *physis*, leading to their self-satisfied conclusion that imperialism is a *nomos* that nature pursues. Their calculated analysis reveals the extent to which the Athenians are interested in justifying their popularly immoral behavior as part of a universal "law" of the strong ruling the weak. It is the long influence of imperialism on historical action that underwrites this ethical position. Xerxes' strategy in explaining his advance on the Greek mainland is not dissimilar in its appeal to *nomos*; he too denies establishing the *nomos* of imperialism (7.8.α1: οὔτ' . . . νόμον τόνδε . . . τιθεὶς) but states that he has received it and will use it (χρήσομαι).[155] Xerxes looks to the more limited sphere of Persian history in order to justify his actions, beginning with the succession (παρελάβομεν) of empire from Astyages to Cyrus. The Athenians gesture to a much more expansive inheritance (παραλαβόντες) in the past, one that will continue into the future. Unlike the Athenians in

[153] See Flower (2006), 276–7, for interlocking lines of causation: (1) Athens and Eretria are seen as responsible for the war and (2) the Persian attack on all of Greece occurs due to their imperialistic drive.

[154] Gomme made a marginal note with this connection, as observed in *HCT* 5.105.2; for literature on the connection between Herodotus and Thucydides on this passage, see Hornblower ad 5.105; Raaflaub (1987), 227–8; (2002), 176; Forsdyke (2006), 229–30.

[155] On this passage and Herodotus, Connor (1984), 156, is instructive: "The contrast between the Persian and the Peloponnesian War runs through many sections of the *Histories*, a counterpoint or subtext to the surface narrative. . . It now becomes evident in the Melian Dialogue." Scanlon (1994) notes that Xerxes omits reference to *physis* as driving expansion.

the Melian Dialogue, however, the challenge that a *nomos* of expansionism poses to normative Persian social values is rarely emphasized. Perhaps this is because Xerxes rightly identifies a historical reality in Persia – they *are* seldom at rest (7.8.1: οὐδαμά κω ἠτρεμίσαμεν).[156] But so too do the Athenians rightly observe that the strong dominate the weak. While these are historical facts, glossing *nomos* as their motive force remains a provocative position, and one that departs from popular morality in Persia and in Athens.[157]

Xerxes' position identifies *nomos* as the impetus of the ruler, even though elsewhere in the narrative it is the mandate of a given society. Note also the resistance of the Persians to the campaign immediately following the speeches of Xerxes and Mardonius, "All the rest of the Persians were silent and did not dare to raise a judgment opposed to the one set before them" (7.10.1). Their stifled desire to protest the campaign becomes a bow of joy after Xerxes reverses his position and orders the Persians to be quiet (7.13.3). Persia's internal resistance to the offensive suggests that this *nomos* is not socially constituted but imposed. Its historical merit is also compromised in an earlier episode, when Darius decides to go to war with Greece not from a compulsory divine *nomos* but from a desire to keep the Persians from inciting a revolution against him. Atossa motivates him to wage war against Greece by warning him of potential Persian revolution if the people remain quiet (3.134.2).

An additional difficulty for Xerxes' reading of Persian imperial history as *nomos* is its departure from popular morality in Persia, where the subjugation of innocents was not a rhetorical argument for expansionism.[158] This

[156] Cf. the empire of the Medes and Cyrus, who are described as not wanting to be still at 1.185.1, 1.190.2. At 7.18.3 Artabanus retreats from his position that Xerxes would be the happiest of men if "remaining quiet" (ἀτρεμίζοντά) following the divine dream; the Spartans attain *eunomia* and cannot keep quiet, 1.66.1; and at 7.149.3 the Argives complain of Sparta's *pleonexia*, "greediness." Cf. Verdin (1982), 328; for Thucydides, see Ehrenberg (1947), 47–53.

[157] A standard interpretation is voiced by Evans (1991), 23, "For Thucydides, imperialism was part of human nature; it was natural for the strong to exploit the weak. For Herodotus, expansionism was a *nomos*, and therefore, if we want to understand it, we should look at an empire's *nomoi*. Imperialism, therefore, fell within the field of ethnology, which was Herodotus' initial interest." Lateiner (1989), 184, sees it as part of the causal mechanism that brings Persian defeat, "When the unrestricted *nomos* of despotism contends with the restrictive *nomoi* of the little Greek states, the heterogeneous Greeks are victorious. Herodotus asks why. He seems to have found his answer in the way different political systems respond to the demands of *nomos* understood both as custom and as law. When the despot constitutes *nomos*, it is unstable and self-interested; when *nomos* is despot, the limitations provide an arena of freedom."

[158] Darius' subsequent war against Athens is waged for reasons of justice, 5.105.2. Cambyses' invasion of Egypt has three potential causes, but Herodotus prefers personal revenge, 3.1–3. Interestingly with respect to Xerxes, the causes of Cyrus' abortive offensive against the Massagetes at 1.204 are

is equally true of the Persian *logioi* whose voices initially answer the *histor*'s question on the cause of the Greco-Persian Wars: according to them, the Greeks were responsible for the invasion because of injustices extending from the Trojan War; this pretext is neglected entirely by Xerxes.[159] Both Xerxes and Mardonius draw attention to the blamelessness of those to be conquered or already under Persian rule (7.8.γ3, 7.9.2). While Xerxes does maintain that the Athenians will merit their destruction, this is subordinate to his overweening sentiment of bringing all of Greece to heel and extending the boundaries of his empire to meet with those of Zeus.[160]

If we juxtapose the language of the king with that of his wise advisor, Artabanus, an alternative response to endemic Persian expansion emerges.[161] Artabanus plays internal historian, recounting his experiences during the disastrous invasion of Scythia undertaken by Darius and the failed mission of Datis and Artaphrenes into Attica.[162] On his reading of Persian history, the Scythians are not as powerful as the Greeks, and, a fortiori, Xerxes' attack on them could be proportionally more damaging for Persia.[163] As in Xerxes' speech, a theological argument follows this historical one, but rather than supporting a *nomos* of expansion as Xerxes had declared, the divine instead acts as a check upon it, striking down disproportionately great creatures (7.10.ε). In his ensuing attack on the half-truths and outright distortions of Mardonius, Artabanus re-translates the *nomos* of expansionism back into the self-interestedness of the Persian court. These two final points are stressed again in the scene that immediately follows, after Xerxes comes to agree with the advice of Artabanus. Artabanus again chides Xerxes for teaching his soul to be appetitive (7.16.α2: διδάσκειν τὴν ψυχὴν πλέον τι δίζησθαι αἰεὶ ἔχειν τοῦ παρεόντος: "to teach your soul to seek ever more than what it has at present") by entertaining the audiences of vicious men, who prevent him from using his true *physis* (7.16.α1).[164] This is a rare case in which

twofold – first, religious and second, historical – but in Cyrus' case this entailed (1) a belief in his own divinity and (2) in his continued successes in line with *his* past.

[159] 1.5.1. Xerxes sacrifices at Troy, 7.43.1–2, after expressing a desire to see it, but there is no reference to his presence there as part of a campaign of vengeance against the Greeks for the events at Troy.

[160] 7.8.γ1–3. Cf. Th. 2.41.4.

[161] For the differences between the two speeches, see Pelling (1991), 133; Baragwanath (2008), 243–4; Grethlein (2009), 199–200. According to Mikalson (2003), 160–1, Artabanus is a Greek actor draped in Persian clothing.

[162] At 7.18.2, he stresses the youth of Xerxes and the folly of Cyrus' campaign against the Massagetes, that of Cambyses against the Ethiopians, and Darius against Scythia again.

[163] With Grethlein (2009), 199.

[164] Scardino (2007), 353, rightly finds that Artabanus advocates a policy of "Ruhe" in opposition to Xerxes. See Clarke (2018), 236–7, on the folly of Xerxes' desire.

Herodotus hints at the opposition of *nomos* and *physis*.[165] Whereas certain contemporary philosophers were suggesting that *nomos* operated as a force against the extremism of human *physis*, Herodotus reverses this emphasis: in Artabanus' speech to Xerxes after the council he compares the king's *physis* to the sea, the most useful of all things when not disturbed by the force of the disruptive winds. So, instead of naturalizing the imperial project as an obvious outcome of nature, Artabanus qua wise advisor treats imperialism as a corruption of the soul, in an idiosyncratic anticipation of Platonic ethics.

Artabanus' reading of Persian history and the divine forces is successful for the moment. After initially rejecting Artabanus' speech, Xerxes eventually comes to agree with it and bids the Persians to remain quiet. This turn of events must force a realignment of the reading of Xerxes' *nomos* of imperialism. Herodotus' judgment that *nomos* is king of all points to its near-gravitational force on the society that practices it. Yet here Xerxes immediately abandons his newly minted Persian *nomos* in favor of quietism, at least until he is impelled to war by the divine dream.

I should digress at this point to examine an important and widespread assertion, that the dream itself represents another instantiation of *nomos*, an interpretation that is grounded in Xerxes' identification of this tradition as aided by the divine.[166] There is no evidence in the *Histories* for divine dreams as connected to *nomos*; instead, *nomos* is almost exclusively tied to the sphere of humans.[167] Recall that on Xerxes' account, a divinity leads the Persians on and with its aid, "it turns out for the better," συμφέρεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἄμεινον (7.8.α1). The results of the Persian invasion – not to mention prior Persian history – hardly encourage identifying the Great King as correct in his assessment of the position of the divine with regard to Persia's expansion. Much more compelling is interpreting the dream not

[165] See pp. 121–22, 146–50.

[166] The misunderstanding of the divine is a common motif prior to dramatic reversal, e.g., Croesus at 1.55–6; Cambyses at 3.65.2. For an analysis of the origins of the dream and its relationship to what has preceded, see Lieshout (1970), 237–40. I am not convinced by Evans (1961), 110, who interprets the passage as suggesting that the dream means that if Xerxes does not make the campaign he will transgress Persian *nomoi*; Scardino (2007), 353, also assimilates the dream to *nomos*: "erst der göttliche Traum gibt dem persischen Nomos die Macht, Artabanos' Einwände außer Kraft zu setzen" ("only the divine dream gives Persian *nomos* the force to override Artabanus' objections"), a position he ties to Xerxes' speech at 7.50.3.

[167] The single exception to this is found in a speech given by Hermotimus of Pedasa, in which he asserts that the gods have delivered his impious enemy into Hermotimus' hands, "making use of a just *nomos*" (8.106.3: νόμῳ δικαίῳ χρεώμενοι). The speech cannot be used as evidence of the narrator's position. N.b. at 7.136.2 Xerxes makes an exaggerated claim that all *men* have conventions (νόμια) against killing heralds, but there is no hint of the divine even here.

as a concrete manifestation of the divine *nomos* that drives Persia to battle but rather in the context of Artabanus' characterization of the divine when faced with an individual who "thinks big": "Do you see how the god blasts those creatures who are over the top and does not allow them to make a display of themselves, but small creatures do not provoke him . . . for the god does not allow any other than himself to think big" (7.10.ε: ὁρᾷς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα ζῷα ὡς κεραυνοῖ ὁ θεὸς οὐδὲ ἐᾷ φαντάζεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σμικρὰ οὐδέν μιν κνίζει . . . οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν). Xerxes' speech to the Persians well exemplifies Chris Pelling's point that the tyrant shows an inability to distinguish the boundary between the human and the divine.[168] Given the deceptive nature of the dream and its unwillingness to bring victory to the Persians, it is preferable to see the dream as connected to Artabanus' vision of the divine, who serve to check what is excessive, even in speech.[169] In an instance of narrative irony, it is Artabanus who subsequently misinterprets the divine dream in spite of his evident understanding of the workings of it. First, he proposes that the dream arose from Xerxes' preoccupation with the muster; when convinced of its divine origin, Artabanus believes it evidence of the coming destruction of Greece rather than Persia (7.18.3).

If the deceptive dream is not to be connected to the *nomos* led by the divine that Xerxes appealed to, the credibility of Xerxes' motivation as *nomos* is further compromised. Xerxes' appeal to *nomos* is not in fact stirred by his reading of Persian history but instead is a rhetorical strategy aimed at justifying his large-scale offensive as a defensible one, in line with the tendency of Persian monarchy to regard the king's will as *nomos*, as in the case of Cambyses.[170] In glossing *nomos* as a desire for more, Xerxes subtly recodes ethical values, in a further dramatization of the frayed relationship of *nomos* to justice in the context of Persian despotism and imperialism.

By crafting the forward momentum of the Persians as *nomos*, Xerxes displays a despotic tendency to unravel traditional concepts of morality in favor of his own personal legality, much as we saw Pheidippides do in the *Clouds*. Additionally, Herodotus' attention to the wisdom and practical

[168] Pelling (2006), 150–1. See also Clarke (2018), 290–3 and 298–301, who has carefully discussed the way in which Persian rulers are marked out for their excesses and for their attempts to rival the divine; she well cites Munson (2001), 185 at 300 n. 81. For "thinking big" as a species of *hybris*, see Cairns (1996), 13–17.

[169] Cf. Croesus' punishment from the divine for considering (ἐνόμισε) himself happy, 1.34.1; Aristodicus at 1.158–60; Glaucus at 6.86.γ2 seeks pardon for what he has said (τῶν ῥηθέντων) but learns that speech and action are equally offensive. For the rarity of divine anger at human *thoughts*, see Pelling (2006), 151 n. 36.

[170] For an alternative view, see Baragwanath (2008), 279.

experience of Artabanus in opposition to the youthful recklessness of Xerxes recreates the *topos* of the young *sophos* destabilizing *nomos* when confronted with a senior figure who acts as a representative of tradition. Xerxes' rationalization of his original plan to invade Greece is couched in generational terms in the arresting metaphor "my youthful spirit bubbled over" (7.13.2: ἡ νεότης ἐπέζεσε). Youth forms the basis of Artabanus' critique of Xerxes (7.18.2). It led to Xerxes' abusive attack against Artabanus, who is explicitly termed his "elder" (ἐς ἄνδρα πρεσβύτερον).[171] This chimes closely with a fragment that may belong to Euripides' *Andromache*, in which a speaker declares that "youth exalted me, and a boldness more than good sense" (*TrGF* F 134a Kannicht: νεότης μ' ἐπῆρε καὶ θράσος τοῦ νοῦ πλέον).[172] Even more noteworthy is how Xerxes' justification puts him in dialogue with the *Clouds*, where it is the young (οἱ νέοι) who are encouraged to sharpen their tongues (1058–9) and learn the Worse Argument. Of course, when the contest over parental-beating arises between Strepsiades and Pheidippides, it too is couched in generational terms of young versus old (1391–2, 1418–19). If it is correct to view Xerxes' characterization in these terms, Herodotus' emplotment of the motivation of the Greco-Persian Wars engages with this philosophical debate and uses it to initiate the Persian war machine's momentum against Greece. The momentary success of Artabanus in dissuading Xerxes from his campaign, will, of course, be entirely undone by the actions of the deceptive dream sent to both, rebooting the doomed war and obviating the need for *nomos* as a pretext.

Conclusion

A progressive reading of the ethnographies within the *Histories* establishes an interpretative framework that translates the respect one's own society gives to its traditional norms into a respect for those of other peoples, supporting a philosophy of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism holds that all societies enjoy their own practices, with no Archimedean viewpoint from which to judge these practices in moral terms. Further, it cultivates a hermeneutic of "reading" culture from the perspective of the people who constitute it and to make sense of difference through the context of

[171] Youth in Persia is elsewhere associated with the need *for* military displays after acquiring royal power, 3.134.3, since with the aging of the mind and body, deeds too are blunted. For the theme of youth in Herodotus and Thucydides, see Scardino (2007), 377–9, 741–2.

[172] Cf. Thgn. 1.629–30 Young. For Alcibiades as the quintessential youthful rabble rouser, see Th. 5.43.2, 6.17.1; Alcibiades argues for this as a useful element to the state, 6.18.6–7.

enculturation. Yet, cultural relativism's recognition of the arbitrary nature of tradition has the potential to threaten the social order through the introduction of revisionary *nomoi*. This consequence is dramatized in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, in contemporaneous tragedy, and in the fragments of the Presocratics who stressed the arbitrariness of *nomos* in contradistinction to the fixity and inevitability of *physis*. In the *Histories*, the problem of revisionary *nomoi* concentrates around the figure of the despot and the imperialist drive, and this complicates a reading of the work as unilaterally supportive of *nomos*. The platitude "*Nomos* is king" fails to capture the pressure put on tradition by way of the tyrannical individual or imperial *nomos*. By highlighting the instances in the *Histories* in which *nomos* is a contested concept, one that can be used as a rhetorical ploy to justify what is popularly unjust, it is possible to place Herodotus' text in a community of thinkers exploring the power of conventional versus subversive ethics. The individual ruler or the empire's creation of its own ethics is contrasted with the portrait of custom, tradition, and law as a popularly sanctioned phenomenon.

The prominence of relativism in the *Histories* carries implications for our understanding of Herodotus' historical project. First, it shows that Herodotus' interrogation uses ethnographic case studies and the rise of the Persian Empire to demonstrate the validity of cultural relativism and the deleterious effects of subjectivism. As a reminder, cultural relativism highlights the diversity of norms, rejects any absolute perspective from which to view these norms, and treats them as having validity for the society in which they obtain. Subjectivism, meanwhile, treats the individual as the measure for human behavior, rather than the culture. The ethical questions raised by the latter phenomenon are highly politicized; the Persian Empire and the Great King are potent illustrations of the perversion of custom and law. This is not to suggest that Herodotus emerges as an unyielding critic of Persia. His depiction of the Persians avoids such gross caricature. Next, the debate on relativism is of real consequence for our understanding of the wider aims of the *Histories* – the challenge to *nomos* plays a role in *the* key causal moment in the narrative – Xerxes' war council. In glossing the motive force of Persia's expansion as *nomos*, Herodotus' Xerxes embodies the youthful and subversive *sophos* familiar from comedy and tragedy and from previous Persian monarchs in the *Histories*, intent upon disturbing popular morality with *nomos* as a screen. This paradigm situates Herodotus alongside the sophistic and Socratic thinkers in the fifth century for whom the variability of cultural norms could foster dangerously appetitive individuals. This is precisely the

language that Artabanus uses in retrospectively depicting the Council: he describes his own speech as a failed attempt to instruct Xerxes "how evil it is to teach the soul always to seek more" (7.16.α2), a reading of Xerxes that implicitly rejects treating his *nomos* as an accurate reflection of Persia and instead repositions it as the ethics of a corrupted individual.

Interpreting Herodotus among Presocratic thinkers whose investigations focused upon questions of ethical importance moves us well beyond the platitude of Herodotus as a philosophical thinker in terms of his empiricism. Much as the narrator vies with the natural scientists in his discussion of the behavior of the Nile, so too he reveals a fluency with the more abstract questions of the New Learning from this period. The *Histories* engages profoundly with the philosophy of cultural relativism and *nomos* and, in the context of Persian hegemony, explores the fraying of *nomos* as an index of a society's own justice. In this way, Herodotus goes beyond identifying *nomos* as a cultural marker particular to a given people to develop the concept into a complex, plastic one with the capacity both to structure and unravel human society.

CHAPTER 3

The Pull of Tradition
Egoism and Persian Revolution

The assassination of the False Smerdis in Book 3 and the ensuing constitutional uncertainty offer Herodotus an inflection point to pause and consider the institution of monarchy in Persia, its strengths and weaknesses. This chapter reexamines the speeches given by the conspirators in advance of the coup and its aftermath. In these episodes, Darius undermines a key *nomos* held by the Persians, their abhorrence of falsehood.[1] As Chapter 2 contended, the disruption of *nomos* is characteristic of Persian rulers. Although Darius does so as a private citizen, he invites comparison with them given his subsequent rise to the throne. Darius' disregard for *nomos* opens a separate philosophical debate, however, on human motivation and self-interest. In a speech to the Persian conspirators, the future Great King defends "egoism," the philosophy that all action is performed in the interest of maximizing the individual's self-interest. This view is set alongside orations by the Persians Otanes and Prexaspes, exponents of cooperative action and altruism, respectively. As we shall see, fifth-century intellectual culture engaged in a spirited interrogation of the individual in relation to self-interest, often in terms of the social contract. The clash between motivation on behalf of the one versus the many will illustrate the complex negotiation in Persia of ruler and ruled, self and society.

Fomenting Revolution in Persia: Darius and Egoism

The plot against the Magi begins with the Persian Otanes, who discovers that the Great King is an imposter through his daughter, one of the wives of the False Smerdis. The Persian deliberations before the attack upon him and his brother set up the political contrasts that will crystallize in the

[1] For deception in Herodotus, see Lateiner (1990).

Constitutional Debate.[2] These include an emphasis on the active role of the plurality in opposition to concern for the individual.

Throughout the revolt, Otanes consistently demonstrates an affinity for pluralizing rather than individual action, which prefigures his support for democracy. Otanes' first initiative is to communicate his knowledge of the fraud to his two closest confidants, with each of these three προσεταιρίσασθαι (*prosetairisasthai*), "taking into partnership" (3.70.2) one other trusted individual. They include Darius as a seventh to their group (3.70.3: προσεταιρίσασθαι) upon his arrival at Susa. This same verb, "to take into partnership," is used of another moment of internal strife and imminent constitutional change, in this case, to democracy, when Cleisthenes embraces the Athenian demos as his coconspirators (5.66.2: προσεταιρίζεται).[3] That it is found here as well chimes with Otanes' future support of the many in the Constitutional Debate. He displays a similar drive to pluralize the proceedings by expanding their network of accomplices, as he reveals in his response to Darius' strategy of attacking the Magi right away: "we must increase our numbers and then attack" (3.71.3: δεῖ γὰρ πλεῦνας γενομένους οὕτως ἐπιχειρέειν).[4] Darius, meanwhile, chastises Otanes and urges immediate action on the grounds that "it seemed right to you to refer this to the many" (3.71.5: ἐπείτε δὲ ὑμῖν ἀναφέρειν ἐς πλεῦνας ἐδόκεε). This phrase, "referring to the many," will be used later in the context of an assembly and again conjures up participatory procedure.[5] Otanes' evocation of the assembly seeps into the language of the other members of their group: Gobryas finally "sets his vote" (3.73.3: νῦν ὦν τίθεμαι ψῆφον) on the proposition made by Darius, phrasing that readily evokes a democratic election. It is fitting that when Otanes concludes his speech in defense of democracy later in the Constitutional Debate, he does so by pronouncing that "in the multitude there is everything" (3.80.6: ἐν γὰρ τῷ πολλῷ ἔνι τὰ πάντα).[6] In his behavior leading up to the insurrection, Otanes subverts Persia's traditional top-down mechanism of political action and creates the possibility for communal achievement.

[2] For parallels in the speeches here and in the Constitutional Debate, see Pelling (2002), 131.

[3] Bringmann (1976), 269–70, argues for the close patterning that the Athenian democratic experiment has on Otanes' position in the Constitutional Debate.

[4] For the democratic inklings that this raises, see Baragwanath (2008), 106 n. 67, with Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella at 3.71.3.

[5] 7.149.2, though in the context of the Spartans.

[6] Pelling (2002), 134 and n. 29, underlines the expression's vagueness but does not outright reject that it may have the air of a democratic expression.

After an exchange of pledges of faith, the seven deliberate their course of action. In the discussion, Darius' addresses notably revolve around the priorities and concerns of the individual and his self-interest. First, he insists that he believed that he alone (3.71.2: αὐτὸς μοῦνος; μοῦνον ἐμέ)[7] knew that the Great King was an imposter and then he demands that the conspirators make the attack straightaway and refuse any delay, μὴ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι (3.71.1: *me hyperballesthai*). He vehemently counters the opposition that comes from Otanes, who urges reflection, by declaring that they will die if they follow this plan.[8] Darius supports the prediction with an argument from individual advantage, claiming that someone would disclose knowledge of the conspiracy to the Magus, "privately contriving profit for himself" (3.71.4: ἰδίῃ περιβαλλόμενος ἑωυτῷ κέρδεα). The anxiety that someone would take the opportunity to betray the group for individual, private gain reveals something of the motivations that Darius attributes to others, even as it correlates to his own self-seeking: if the conspirators side with Otanes and postpone the attack, he promises to reveal the plot to the False Smerdis himself. That is, even if the wider Persian community is somehow threatened by the imposter, as the conspirators believe, Darius makes clear that his own individual good supersedes all else, as his threat to inform on them exposes. All the while, the spotlight remains on Darius and his agenda, as the repetition of "I myself" drives home (3.71.2: ἐγώ . . . αὐτός; 3.71.5: αὐτὸς ἐγώ). Darius' intimidation spurs Otanes to ask him for an actual strategy for getting access to the Great King, given the presence of the guards at the palace. Following this, Darius gives a speech that has regularly been viewed as evoking a Greek sophistic intellectual context.[9] Its themes constitute an elaborate justification of pursuing individual advantage as *the* decisive factor in using true or false speech.[10] None of the guards, he assures his audience, will stop them, either through awe or fear. If one does, Darius has the perfect

[7] Bringmann (1976), 277, interprets this as just another gambit at wresting leadership, in this case, from Otanes.

[8] See the similar staging of debate and delay (Artabanus) as opposed to action and gain (Xerxes) at 7.47–50.

[9] For this passage, see Dihle (1962), 217, (wrongly attributed to Otanes) which he connects to Pl. *Grg.* 527c and *Resp.* 338c; Bringmann (1976), 277–8; Balcer (1987), 46–7; Evans (1991), 57–8; Pelling (2002), 130–1 and 130 n. 25; Raaflaub (2002), 160, links it to Gorgias' *Helen* 10–11. Alternatively, Rosen (1988), 41, argues that "Darius, of course, is not a philosopher," although this is modified at 47–9.

[10] With Bringmann (1976), 278: "in ihnen steckt schlechthin die Handlungsmaxime des Dareios. Anders gewendet: sie sind der Maßstab, nach dem die Erzählung vom Aufstieg des Dareios gestaltet ist." ("In them lies Darius' maxim for action, such as it is. To put it another way, they are the yardstick by which the narrative of the ascent of Darius is laid out.")

story ready: he is carrying a message to the Great King from his father, out of whose presence he has only just come.

> Ὀτάνη, ἦ πολλά ἐστι τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οὐκ οἷά τε δηλῶσαι, ἔργῳ δέ· ἄλλα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ λόγῳ μὲν οἷά τε, ἔργον δὲ οὐδὲν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λαμπρὸν γίνεται . . . ἔνθα γάρ τι δεῖ ψεῦδος λέγεσθαι, λεγέσθω. τοῦ γὰρ αὐτοῦ γλιχόμεθα οἵ τε ψευδόμενοι καὶ οἱ τῇ ἀληθείῃ διαχρεώμενοι. οἱ μέν γε ψεύδονται τότε ἐπεάν τι μέλλωσι τοῖσι ψεύδεσι πείσαντες κερδήσεσθαι, οἱ δ' ἀληθίζονται ἵνα τι τῇ ἀληθείῃ ἐπισπάσωνται κέρδος καί τις μᾶλλόν σφι ἐπιτράπηται. οὕτω οὐ ταὐτὰ ἀσκέοντες τὠυτοῦ περιεχόμεθα. εἰ δὲ μηδὲν κερδήσεσθαι μέλλοιεν, ὁμοίως ἂν ὅ τε ἀληθιζόμενος ψευδὴς εἴη καὶ ὁ ψευδόμενος ἀληθής. ὃς ἂν μέν νυν τῶν πυλουρῶν ἑκὼν παρίῃ, αὐτῷ οἱ ἄμεινον ἐς χρόνον ἔσται· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀντιβαίνειν πειρᾶται, διαδεικνύσθω ἐνθαῦτα ἐὼν πολέμιος, καὶ ἔπειτα ὠσάμενοι ἔσω ἔργου ἐχώμεθα. (3.72.2–5)
>
> Otanes, truly there are many things that are unable to be made manifest in word, but in action; there are other things that are able to be made manifest in words, but no illustrious act comes from them . . . where a lie must be said, let it be said. For we aim after the same thing, those who lie and those who use the truth. Some lie when they intend to profit by persuading others with their lies, others tell the truth so that they may derive some gain via the truth, and so that one relies rather more on it. So although we do not practice the same thing, we aim at the same thing. If there were no gain to be had, equally would the truth-teller be a liar and the liar truthful. Now whoever of the gatekeepers willingly lets us pass by, it will be better for him in the future. But for he who attempts to resist us, let him be declared an enemy right then and there, and after pushing our way inside, let us lay hold of the act.

The aim of convincing the Persian conspirators that falsehood is defensible returns to the ethnography of Persia and exposes Darius as an agitator of its norms, in an extension of the argument in the previous chapter. In the Persian *nomoi*, Herodotus characterized the people as uniquely bound to the *logos* that is true: for fifteen years, Persian youths' education focused on three fundamentals: horsemanship, archery, and "truth-telling," ἀληθίζεσθαι (*alethizesthai*).[11] This is combined with an extreme disdain for falsehood, "what it is not permitted for them to do, it is not even permitted for them to say. For lying has been deemed most shameful among them" (1.138.1: ἅσσα δέ σφι ποιέειν οὐκ ἔξεστι, ταῦτα οὐδὲ λέγειν ἔξεστι. αἴσχιστον δὲ αὐτοῖσι τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται).[12] As this

[11] 1.136.2. Provocatively, Benardete (1969), 80, argues that Cambyses was particularly obligated to truth, "in a perverse way true and false speech determined everything he did."

[12] Cf. DK 68 B 190. Baragwanath (2008), 84–5, argues that the *nomos* destabilizes Darius' profit motive.

demonstrates, Persia's ethical norms mandate against not just unlawful deeds but also false language.[13] For this reason, lies are "most shameful," a superlative that underlines the power of misusing language as much as action. As has often been observed by previous scholars, the *nomos* is a curious one: it raises an expectation that is seldom met in the context of the Persians in the *Histories*. More to the point, it is forcefully contradicted by the future Great King Darius' speech. Even before this, the Persian monarch has played fast and loose with the truth; before his death, Cambyses instructed his nobles to put down the rule of the Magian and take back the empire "by deceit, if it has been taken from us by deceit" (3.65.6).[14]

Darius' address begins with an overwrought and balanced antithesis of word and deed, μέν and δέ, expressive of extreme contrast that is stylistically evocative of sophistic rhetoric.[15] This cleavage is significant, as in the above *nomos*, the narrator explicitly noted that for the Persians whatever it is not permitted for them to do, it is not even permitted for them to put into words (ποιέειν . . . λέγειν). That is, among the Persians, illicit deeds and illicit speech have correspondingly negative implications. Darius' opening salvo and its highlighting of the distinct capacity for deeds to lead to "some things" becoming manifest and words to "others" is an asymmetry that moves against the traditional ethnographic stance of Persia – as will his endorsement of false speech. It deflates the expectations of his internal Persian audience that force is what is called for in the initial portion of their plot and sets up speech as an alternative.[16]

[13] It is important to note that the narrator holds this as accurate knowledge, cf. 1.140.1: ταῦτα μὲν ἀτρεκέως ἔχω περὶ αὐτῶν εἰδὼς εἰπεῖν. ("I can speak on these things accurately, knowing about them.") I disagree with How-Wells 3.72, who find that "this sophistry is an attempt at consistency" with 1.138.

[14] On truth telling and Persia, see Benardete (1969), 69–98; Thompson (1996), esp. 70–2; Briant (2002), 124–7, who interprets it as a Mazdaic/Zoroastrian opposition; Baragwanath (2008), 84. Meanwhile, Evans (1991), 57, contrasts Darius' defense of lying with his stress on the truth in the Bisitun inscription. Lateiner (1989), 275 n. 31, judiciously offers that even if the inscription was unknown to Herodotus, Darius' speech has a "delicious irony."

[15] On sophistic style, see Poulakos (1983); Connor (1986); Consigny (1992). Commenting on Darius' instrumental account of human action, Provencal (2015), 59, argues that this is used by Herodotus to vilify Darius: "Rather than attributing the sophistic morality of Darius to Herodotus as a sophist, however, we should attribute it to his portrait of Darius as a future sophist king . . . . The episode is an excellent example of how Herodotus is engaged in a dialogical relationship with the sophists in his representation of the Persians."

[16] For an alternate reading of it as expressive of a rhetoric of caution, see Rosen (1988), 41. Zali (2015), 6, rightly suggests that Darius, "emphasizes the need for combined words and actions in the context of the Persian conspiracy against the false Smerdis," although he does so by highlighting the cleavage between them. For the *logos-ergon* antithesis, see Zali (2015), 6 n. 24. Cf. DK 68 B 145.

The declaration that "where a lie must be told, let it be told" combines an impersonal verb (δεῖ) and third-person imperative (λεγέσθω) to create a detached, objective sense of obligation. In addition to being, apparently, a descriptive account of the world, the phrasing is normative. Truth and falsehood cloak the motive of personal "gain" (κερδήσεσθαι; κέρδος). In the *Histories*, gain is often associated with monetary wealth.[17] But there are attempts to define its referent in other ways, as when Croesus tells Adrastus that his profit will be in bearing the misfortune of accidental homicide lightly (1.35.4) or when Artabanus proposes that good counsel is the greatest of gains (7.10.δ2). Here, the term hearkens backward to Darius' warning that someone of the group would accrue gain for himself by betraying their cause. Since such true speech would be in the conspirator's interest, this is consistent with his stance on egoism. The exclusion of any middle ground gives the profit motive a universalizing force. A hypothetical conditional cements the case:[18] if there were no potential for gain, people would tell truths and falsehoods indiscriminately (ὁμοίως). This affirms that those who claim to tell the truth out of a desire for altruism or justice are nonetheless still acting in the service of their own profit margins. The close of the speech circles back to the importance of action and its separate role from that of *logos*, in the assurance that after taking care of the guards, the group will turn to the deed (ἔργου ἐχώμεθα) of dispatching the False Smerdis.

Maximizing self-interest in speech through truth and falsehood does not commit Darius to the position that these are the same, in a kind of alethic relativism. As he says, speakers of truth and lies are not practicing the same things (οὐ ταὐτά); it is their deployment that is fluid, tied only to individual self-interest.[19] An objective sense of truth and falsehood remains in place. It is also worth noting what is missing in this argument: while Darius does make use of the language of obligation, he cannily avoids any reference to the morality that this is founded upon, and the rectitude of lying or its opposite do not enter into the discussion, in contrast with the Persian ethnography. Darius might have justified his position as a speaker in an unknown tragedy of Sophocles in saying that "lying isn't noble (καλὸν μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ψευδῆ λέγειν), but to the extent that the truth leads to terrible destruction, it is forgivable to speak what is not noble"

[17] 1.187.5, 4.152.3–4, 6.86.2, 6.100.2, 8.5.3, 9.38.1.
[18] On hypothetical reasoning in the Presocratics, see Lloyd (1964); Rescher (1991); Gera (2000), with an eye to Herodotus.
[19] Bringmann (1976), 278, draws a similar conclusion.

(F 352 Radt) – but he does not. Inasmuch as Darius makes no reference to questions of right or wrong, strictly speaking he is an amoralist. For this reason, the contention that has been made that Darius is evincing moral relativism should be discarded; this is a descriptive account of the way of the world, but praise and blame are absent from it.[20] If egoism dependably explains the motivation of human agents, this repudiates Persia's customary adherence to truth and scorn for lying. Certainly, it explains the prior willingness of Cyrus and Cambyses to engage in treachery to advance their imperial aims.[21]

Darius' love of profit is sketched long before the coup. In a discussion of Nitocris, the queen of Babylon, we are told that she inscribed her tomb with an invitation to future kings of Babylon to open and take money from it, if ever in need of riches. Although the conquest of Babylon first takes place in the reign of Cyrus, it is Darius who breaches funerary decorum by breaking into the chamber, intending to plunder its wealth. The remarkable queen, however, has a surprise for him, as inscribed on the interior of her crypt is the judgment that, "if you were not insatiate of wealth and a lover of gain (αἰσχροκερδής) you would not have opened the grave of the dead" (1.187.5). This is reiterated by Darius' sobriquet, the "retailer" (3.89.3: κάπηλος), after his establishment as Great King.[22] Elsewhere, Darius reveals himself to be motivated by profit and willing to break the social mores of other peoples. He makes another proleptic appearance after the particularly disturbing breaches of religious observance made by Cambyses. In Darius' testing of the tenacity of customs surrounding burial practices among the Greeks and the Callatian Indians, he bribes them with money to subvert their norms. Very in-character, he wants to break the strength of *nomos* by recourse to the profit motive. This intertwining of the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses with Darius through flashforwards creates a strong sense of continuity among the Persian rulers. Darius' insistence on his own profit represents the persistence of the tradition of Persian monarchy, not a break with it.

Still, it is not clear that Darius is able to persuade the group to enact his plan through his argument. After he speaks, Gobryas endorses his strategy

[20] Here I differ from Provencal (2015), 59, "Herodotus has Darius justify his action with the sophistic view that true morality arises from self-interest." For Darius as flirting with ethical relativism, see Raaflaub (2002), 160. Callicles will argue that self-interest is behavior specific to the "strong," or the ruler, but Darius makes no limiting provision.

[21] Cyrus does so at 1.205.1; Cambyses at, e.g., 3.21.2. The truthfulness of his subjects is a target of Cambyses' paranoia, 3.27.3, 3.35.

[22] With Baragwanath (2008), 62–3.

of immediate attack but rallies the Persians on the grounds of the nobility of the action of saving the empire, their willingness to die for the cause, and the indignity of having a Mede and a mutilated Magian as king. Gobyras bids the group to remember what their king had "enjoined" (ἐπέσκηψε) upon them (3.73.2), in a reference to Cambyses' final demand that had enjoined (ἐπισκήπτω) the Persians to avenge the treachery of the False Smerdis (3.65.6). At the time of this command, the conspirator clarifies, he had believed the king to be deceiving (διαβολῇ) them, while now he realizes the truth of Cambyses' words and knows that they must act upon them. In outlining these motivations, Gobryas returns to the traditional Persian obedience to the ruler and to an observance of his ethnographic imperative for truthful speech. In fact, he passes over Darius' support of egoism and the pursuit of individual profit. It is after Gobryas' speech that the group agrees to strike.[23]

The episode began with Otanes' stress on the collective in the deliberations of the conspirators. A second counsel scene bookends it, which has often been analyzed in relation to what preceded. In it, the Magians attempt to bring the Persian Prexaspes into their intrigue.[24]

> τούτων δή μιν εἵνεκεν καλέσαντες φίλον προσεκτῶντο πίστι τε καταλαβόντες καὶ ὁρκίοισι, ἢ μὲν ἔξειν παρ' ἑωυτῷ μηδ' ἐξοίσειν μηδενὶ ἀνθρώπων τὴν ἀπὸ σφέων ἀπάτην ἐς Πέρσας γεγονυῖαν, ὑπισχνεύμενοι τὰ πάντα οἱ μυρία δώσειν. (3.74.2)
>
> For the sake of this they had called him and exchanged pledges and oaths and won him over as a friend, that truly he would keep to himself and not advertise to any man their deception of the Persians, and they promised that they would give all things to him in vast quantities.

At first, Prexaspes agrees to the deception. But when he is asked "as the most trustworthy of men among the Persians" (3.74.4) to uphold the legitimacy of the pretender to the masses, Prexaspes finally "revealed the truth" (3.75.2: ἐξέφαινε τὴν ἀληθείην) to the people. He gave a genealogy of the royal line ending with Cyrus and reminded the people of all the goods that he had given them and *then* informs them that they are ruled by the Magian. Before taking his own life, he commands the Persians to take back their empire and avenge themselves.

[23] Cf. Th. 3.43.1–2, where the mere suspicion of the profit motive disqualifies a speaker in the eyes of an Athenian audience; allegedly even the best orator must be a good liar.

[24] For Prexaspes as a correction of Darius, see Benardete (1969), 85; Rosen (1988), 42. Baragwanath (2008), 84, notes the failure of Darius' explanation in accounting for Prexaspes' action.

In some respects, the passage is a doublet of the conspirators' counsel scene. As the Persians did, the Magians take oaths with Prexaspes in order to guard against his departing (ἐξοίσειν) and revealing their deception. Next, Prexaspes abruptly breaks his pledge, which is just the act feared by Darius. Prexaspes' oath to the Magians is drawn attention to in the moment of his revelation, as he "willingly forgot" or "willingly disregarded" ἑκὼν ἐπελήθετο (3.75.1) what he had sworn. He does so based on a factor he states he cannot ignore, necessity (3.75.2: ἀναγκαίην), which echoes Darius' own statement of necessity earlier in speaking falsely.[25] In this sense, the narrative brings the audience to consider the variations within a shared pattern.

Clearly, in breaking faith with the Magians, Prexaspes overlooks his immediate self-interest.[26] It has been argued persuasively that this action undercuts Darius' egoism, since Prexaspes' truthful words result in his demise.[27] Like Otanes, Prexaspes is preoccupied with the community rather than the individual. In his self-sacrifice, he emerges as an individual committed to the benefit of Persia rather than himself, as his speech recounts the good done by Cyrus to the Persians as a whole.[28] If this reading is correct, then he might be thought to reassert traditional morality in Persia on truthful speech in his rejection of deception. In the debate on self-interest, Prexaspes would be opposed to Darius and speak against the latter's position.

In the denouement of the rebellion, the conspirators learn of Prexaspes' final act en route to their attack. Derailed by the news, they again debate what course of action to take and are divided between a proposal of Otanes' to delay and of Darius' to attack immediately (3.76.2: μηδὲ ὑπερβάλλεσθαι). After a portent from the heavens, they back Darius' approach. The divine approval of the future Great King's plan continues, as when they move past the guards they are yielded to as those with a "divine escort" (3.77.1: θείῃ πομπῇ). Yet Herodotus explicitly states that none of the guards asks them anything, leaving Darius' defense of falsehood unmotivated by the events themselves. This lack of relevance to the narrative action makes clearer the role of the speech in characterizing

[25] He forgets to say that the Persians are ruled by the true Smerdis, but he also forgets his oath, which specifically stated that he not reveal the deception, 3.74.2.

[26] Contrast Th. 1.5.1, where the powerful work for their gain and for the maintenance of the weak; cf. Th. 1.8.3.

[27] Benardete (1969), 85, "The truthful man and the liar do not always aim at the same thing by different means; the necessity of the truth itself proves ultimately to be stronger than the fear of death." Cf. Baragwanath (2008), 84.

[28] Although Bringmann (1976), 277, compares him unfavorably with the more heroic role of Otanes. For altruism and its limits in the Athenian context, seminal is Christ (2012).

Darius before his acquisition of the throne. With its contact with the non-individualist ethics of Otanes and Prexaspes, the passage approaches the controversy over advocating falsehood for gain in fifth-century philosophical discourse. The following section surveys this problem in intellectual culture before returning to the wider scope of the profit motive in the *Histories*.

Intellectual Culture and the Profit Motive

In the sixth century, Theognis wrote of falsehood that even if it gave a trifling delight in its beginning, in the end it was a "shameful and base profit" (αἰσχρὸν δὴ κέρδος καὶ κακόν), one with no element of nobility (1. 607–10 Young).[29] Among Herodotus' contemporaries, there were similarly strident critics of false speech for gain on the grounds of its departure from justice. The chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* warns that one must gain profit with justice (889). In Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, a character avers that "to those who are base, profit is more important than justice" (*TrGF* F 760a Kannicht: κακοῖς τὸ κέρδος τῆς δίκης ὑπέρτερον).[30] The opposition of profit and justice is also found in the prologue of the *Children of Heracles*, as Iolaus utters the apophthegm that "one man is just by nature to his neighbours while the other kind has a will devoted to gain (ὁ δ' ἐς τὸ κέρδος λῆμ' ἔχων ἀνειμένον) and is useless (ἄχρηστος) to his city (2–4)."[31] "Uselessness" is part of a pointed commentary on his alienation from society. In Thucydides' *History*, it is notable that either he or a near-contemporaneous interpolator describes the unraveling of social and political norms in the stasis at Corcyra as being driven by those who "preferred gain to not doing injustice" (3.84.2: προυτίθεσαν τοῦ τε μὴ ἀδικεῖν τὸ κερδαίνειν), a consequence of the power of envy (τὸ φθονεῖν).[32] The link between injustice and falsehood for gain is elsewhere implicit and morally culpable: Oedipus accuses the seer Teiresias of perverting his mantic art by lying for his own profit (388–9); and in the *Antigone*, Creon repeatedly makes the same charge (1035–7, 1055, 1061).[33]

[29] See also 1.122 and 1.390. Cf. Hes. *Op.* 352.

[30] Critias F 17 Snell = Eur. F 659 Nauck, opposes base gain with nobility.

[31] For a variation, see Eur. *Med.* 86–7: ὡς πᾶς τις αὑτὸν τοῦ πέλας μᾶλλον φιλεῖ | [οἱ μὲν δικαίως, οἱ δὲ καὶ κέρδους χάριν], where an interpolator expanded the sentiment to ally self-regard to gain.

[32] The twisted logic of gain among the Athenians can be readily found, e.g., Th. 5.92–3.

[33] At Soph. *OT* 594–5, Creon anticipates and counters the suspicion that he is operating for gain. In *Ant.* 1056, Teiresias retorts that it is the tyrant who is accustomed to gain his wealth basely (αἰσχροκέρδειαν).

Contemporary thinkers pursued a line of reasoning according to which human action should be directed by individual advantage. The best exemplar of this strand of thinking is found in Antiphon.[34] In the fragmentary *On Truth*, the philosopher holds that the appropriate barometer of human action is advantage, which is the correct goal of a life lived according to nature.[35]

> δικα[ιο]σύνη πάντα <τὰ> τῆς πό[λεω]ς νόμιμα ἐν ᾗ ἂν πολι[τεύ]ηταί τις μὴ [παρ]αβαίνειν· χρῷτ' ἂν οὖν ἄνθρωπος μάλιστα ἑαυτῷ ξυμφ[ε]ρόντως δικαιοσύνῃ εἰ μετὰ μὲν μαρτύρων τ[ο]ὺς νόμους μεγά[λο]υς ἄγοι· μονούμενος δὲ μαρτύρων, τὰ τῆς φύσεως· (DK 87 B 44 F A col. I 6–23)
>
> Justice is not to transgress the *nomima* of whatever polis one happens to be a citizen. Consequently, a man would use justice in a way especially advantageous to himself if among witnesses he were to consider the *nomoi* great, but by himself and without witnesses, to consider the things relating to *physis* that way.

Antiphon sets the individual at odds with his society. The polis dictates certain behaviors from its citizens, and Antiphon is not calling for political anarchy – in the presence of others, these directives should be followed.[36] Instead, he hollows out traditional morality by arguing for their rejection in private in the pursuit of individual gain. Those who follow the dictates of convention are, in fact, at the risk of harm: "But now it is obvious that justice deriving from law is not adequate to help those who readily accept such things."[37] Euripides' infamous Ixion seems to follow these dictates in his scandalous remark that one should "win the reputation of a just man but undertake the deeds of one doing everything where he can make a gain" (*TrGF* F 426a Kannicht: τοῦ μὲν δικαίου τὴν δόκησιν ἄρνυσο, τὰ δ'

[34] See Havelock (1957), 265–9, for a still-useful discussion of Antiphon's utilitarianism; Provencal (2015), 236, briefly notes its similarity to ideas found in Antiphon and Plato's Thrasymachus. The debate on the amoralism of Antiphon rages on. For advocates, see Guthrie (1969), 112; Kerferd (1981), 116–17; Furley (1981); Nill (1985), 53; for those opposed, see Moulton (1972); Reesor (1987), 204, 210–14. Earlier bibliography on Antiphon's *On Truth* can be found at Moulton (1972), 329 n. 1.

[35] For which, see the excellent commentary of Pendrick (2002), loc. cit.; Ostwald (1990), 299–301, 303.

[36] Nill (1985), 73.

[37] DK 87 B 44 F A col. VI 3–9: νῦν] δὲ φαίνε[ται] τοῖς προσιεμ[ένοις] τὰ τοιαῦτα τὸ ἐ[κ] νόμου δίκαι[ον] οὐχ ἱκανὸν ἐπικουρεῖν. Moulton (1972), 338, "The passage is probably eudaimonistic in the traditional Greek sense, i.e. it recognizes that pleasures are more commonly advantageous than pains for men; but it does not claim that the unlimited pursuit of pleasures is mankind's natural destiny."

ἔργα τοῦ πᾶν δρῶντος ἔνθα κερδανεῖ).[38] A subsequent fragment of the *Ixion* may counter this proposition by making an appeal to the wider community, holding that the one who wants to have more (*TrGF* 425 Kannicht: πλέον ἔχειν) than the citizens is "incapable of blending" (ἄμικτος) with friends and the city. The incompatibility of self-interest as an overriding motivation with participation in the polis draws attention to the negative consequences of egoism for the civic fabric.

In Antiphon, the contrast is also a political one, placing front and center the compromises in autonomy mandated by the social contract in Athens. In an example given of a prosecutor who has been wronged by a defendant, the prosecution must persuade the jury that they have been victimized or exact their own justice by means of deception (ἀπ[άτ]ῃ),[39] while the defendant has precisely the same means available, a fact that unfairly puts them on the same initial footing. In another denigration of the legal system, Antiphon writes that the witness who provides a testimony of the truth paradoxically appears both just and unjust. He is considered just for his support of the one he is testifying for but acts unjustly by incriminating an individual who has done him no personal harm and may well take vengeance on him later. Again, the individual's self-interest is the barometer of action, and the conclusion to be drawn is that acting against one's own interests is injustice to the self (B 44).

Evidently, opposition arose in response to this. In the late fifth-century *Anonymous Iamblichi*, the philosopher explores the conditions through which virtue can be practiced and expressly rejects such motivation:

> ἔτι τοίνυν οὐκ ἐπὶ πλεονεξίαν ὁρμᾶν δεῖ, οὐδὲ τὸ κράτος τὸ ἐπὶ τῇ πλεονεξίᾳ ἡγεῖσθαι ἀρετὴν εἶναι, τὸ δὲ τῶν νόμων ὑπακούειν δειλίαν· πονηροτάτη γὰρ αὕτη ἡ διάνοιά ἐστι, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς πάντα τἀναντία τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς γίνεται, κακία τε καὶ βλάβη. (DK 89 B 6)
>
> And besides, one should not start out for advantage, nor should power based on advantage be considered virtue and obedience to the laws cowardice. For this way of thinking is most wicked, as a result of which comes about everything that is the opposite of what is good, both malice and harm.

[38] According to Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 19e, Euripides was seriously critiqued for the impiety of Ixion's character.

[39] This restoration is accepted by Laks-Most's text of Antiphon at D 38 col. 6; by Caizzi and Bastianini (1989) papyrus 1364 F B col. 6. However, DK B 44 A col. 6 restore ἀπ<αιτ>ῃ̣. The term need not be pejorative, Wheeler (1988), 31–2, 105–6.

In a refutation of egoism, the philosopher argues that as a moral failing it damages the individual and offers an instrumental account of why it must be rejected.[40]

Still, the philosophy of self-interest had its sponsors. Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* has its eponymous hero contend that all action arises from the pursuit of gain, *kerdos* (κέρδος), or the avoidance of punishment (DK 82 B 11a.19). Given the conceit that Palamedes is arguing on behalf of his life, this should not be understood as carrying an obviously negative moral connotation. Closely aligned to Darius' words to the conspirators is a fragment from an unknown play of Sophocles in which the speaker affirms that "gain is pleasing, even if it comes from falsehoods" (τὸ κέρδος ἡδύ, κἂν ἀπὸ ψευδῶν ἴῃ).[41] In fact, this conjunction of falsehood and the pursuit of self-interest found in the *Histories* is later probed on the tragic stage. Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, performed in 409 BCE, dramatized the contest of self-interest and traditional morality. In a dialogue early in the play, Odysseus attempts to persuade Neoptolemus to take Philoctetes' bow by deception rather than force.[42] Odysseus urges Neoptolemus to abandon his nature and give himself over to him for a short time – he is ominously instructed to yield to "shamelessness" (83: ἀναιδές) – but only in order to be revealed as just and pious later on. Neoptolemus resists even a momentary lapse in morality by declaring "what words I feel distaste in hearing, | son of Laertes, these I also hate to act upon" (86–7: ἐγὼ μὲν οὓς ἂν τῶν λόγων ἀλγῶ κλύων, | Λαερτίου παῖ, τούσδε καὶ πράσσειν στυγῶ).[43] Like the Persians, Neoptolemus aligns speech and action, uniting moral culpability in hearing and in deed.

Odysseus responds with praise for *logos* over deeds, declaring the tongue the more powerful tool (96–9).[44] In doing so, he aims to reestablish the division between speech and action but by elevating the prior, recalling Darius' contrast. Yet Neoptolemus continues to question Odysseus' plan for deceiving Philoctetes on the basis of its requiring him to lie:

[40] With Pelling (2002), 130 n. 25. For an excellent discussion of this passage, see Horky (2020), 282–4. See Democritus, DK 68 B 252, for a similar critique of the advantage calculus when opposed to the civic good.

[41] Soph. F 833 Radt.

[42] For a complementary discussion of deception, philosophy, and the tragedy, see Billings (2021), 131–51.

[43] In an echo of Achilles at *Il.* 9.12–13.

[44] Cf. Soph. *Phil.* 131, where Odysseus suggests that Neoptolemus δέχου τὰ συμφέροντα τῶν ἀεὶ λόγων ("take the advantage of his every word"). For the force of *logos* in the tragedy, see Podlecki (1966).

Νε. τί οὖν μ᾽ ἄνωγας ἄλλο πλὴν ψευδῆ λέγειν;
Οδ. λέγω σ᾽ ἐγὼ δόλῳ Φιλοκτήτην λαβεῖν. . .
Νε. οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγῇ δῆτα τὸ ψευδῆ λέγειν;
Οδ. οὔκ, εἰ τὸ σωθῆναί γε τὸ ψεῦδος φέρει.
Νε. πῶς οὖν βλέπων τις ταῦτα τολμήσει λακεῖν;
Οδ. ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει.
Νε. κέρδος δ᾽ ἐμοὶ τί τοῦτον ἐς Τροίαν μολεῖν;

(100–12)

Neoptolemus: So what do you bid me to do except speak lies?
Odysseus: I am telling you to take Philoctetes by a trap. . .
Neoptolemus: Don't you consider lying shameful?
Odysseus: No, not if the falsehood brings salvation.
Neoptolemus: How could someone have the face to dare to utter them?
Odysseus: Whenever you do something for gain, it is not fitting to delay.
Neoptolemus: What gain is it for me that he goes to Troy?

In its use against enemies, Odysseus' reference to the use of a "trap" (δόλος) – a term associated with trickery that may have its roots in baiting fish – would carry a neutral connotation.[45] However, in his willingness to treat the Greek Philoctetes as an enemy by using stratagems against him that were elsewhere reserved for their actual antagonists, the Trojans, Odysseys becomes a much more ambivalent leader.[46]

The passage corresponds closely to what we find in the *Histories*. Like Darius, Odysseus encourages his fellow conspirator to allow for false speech in the pursuit of advantage (κέρδος) against a moral intuition that it is shameful (αἰσχρόν).[47] And as with the Persian revolutionary, he connects the lie to an impersonal sense of duty with πρέπει ("it is fitting"), which limits individual culpability. He too mandates against any delay (ὀκνεῖν), as Darius persistently did. Yet unlike the Great King, Odysseus is explicit in his statement that the trap is in the service of the Greeks on the plains of Troy. The morality of lying is rationalized due to its goal of "salvation," a term that widens the screen to include the fortunes of the Greeks as a whole. Odysseus' desire for victory is fully consonant with the wider Greek cause and he has at times been identified with the state

[45] Billings (2021), 139. For the term, see Wheeler (1988), 30, 103.
[46] With Billings (2021), 135–6; however, I am not persuaded by his statement at 137, "there is nothing necessarily *sophistic* (or even profoundly philosophical) about Odysseus' reasoning."
[47] For this passage, see Hesk (2000), 195–8. E.g., Hom. *Il.* 9.312–13; Thgn. 1.607–10 Young: ἀρχῇ ἔπι ψεύδους μικρὰ χάρις: εἰς δὲ τελευτὴν | αἰσχρὸν δὴ κέρδος καὶ κακὸν ἀμφότερα | γίνεται. οὐδέ τι καλόν, ὅτῳ ψεῦδος προσαμαρτῇ | ἀνδρὶ καὶ ἐξέλθῃ πρῶτον ἀπὸ στόματος. ("There is little favour from lies in the beginning; in the end | it becomes a gain both shameful and base. | Nor is there something noble, | to whomever tells a lie | and utters it first from his mouth.").

itself.[48] In this sense, he might be thought to advocate for a kind of "Noble Lie," akin to Plato's Socrates in the *Republic*. There, falsehood is essential to the maintenance of the society's political and social hierarchies and tolerated for its promotion of virtue in the individual.[49] By contrast, as Mary Whitlock Blundell observes of the *Philoctetes*, "Odysseus' language suggests, however, that his overriding aim is in fact the fulfilment of his own goals, which just happen to coincide with the public good."[50] After all, later in the play, he will revise his motivation by revealing that his nature is directed by a desire to be victorious (1052: νικᾶν γε μέντοι πανταχοῦ χρῄζων ἔφυν).[51] And Odysseus' errant speech is targeted by Philoctetes, in his complaint that "for him all can be said, all dared" (633–4).[52] The primacy of the profit drive is reiterated in Sophocles' *Creusa*, where a speaker refers to even wealthy mortals as being among those who cling to gain, since "other things rank second to mortals after money" (F 354 Radt: κἄστι πρὸς τὰ χρήματα | θνητοῖσι τἆλλα δεύτερ').[53]

For his part, though Neoptolemus initially bucks the strategy, by the end of the exchange he begins to accept Odysseus' plan, as his response to Odysseus concentrating on his own gain (κέρδος δ' ἐμοὶ) makes clear. He yields and agrees to the deception, persuaded that he will be called wise and noble (119). Neoptolemus' solipsistic heroism may make him an easier mark for Odysseus, as when Troy is mentioned, it is because the young hero worries that *he* will not be the one responsible for its sack.[54] There is a dramatic momentum behind their rugged individualism; it will throw into relief just how circumscribed self-interest is in the face of the social bond that Neoptolemus and Philoctetes will share.[55] Fittingly for its performance context in the reestablished democracy, social entanglement that looks beyond the self is central to the ideology of the Athenian state and its maintenance of empire. Further, Athenian democratic political culture relied upon truthful speech to direct the city's course in the assembly.

[48] Norwood (1920), 162–3; Nussbaum (1976); Gill (1980), 140; Hesk (2000), 190–1.
[49] E.g., Schofield (2007) and Pl. *Resp.* 382a-c.
[50] Blundell (1987), 313. For the clash between private profit and the public good, see Th. 2.65.7. Odysseus is often considered a character imbued with sophistic traits, see Rose (1976); Craik (1980); Goldhill (1997), 141–5; Altmeyer (2001).
[51] The impersonal δεῖ is present in what precedes at Soph. *Phil.* 1049–51, where Odysseus underscores his own moral malleability.
[52] Hesk (2000), 194–5, argues for the necessity of Odysseus' deception. For another favorable reading of Odysseus, see Daneš (2019).
[53] This may be a response to F 356 Radt.
[54] Podlecki (1966), 236–8, on Odysseus' pragmatism and his rewriting of the *kleos* of Neoptolemus.
[55] On the "paternal" struggle over Neoptolemus by Odysseus and Philoctetes, Roisman (1997).

Sophocles' treatment of the sophistic debate returns to the clash in values found in the *Histories*, where a transgressive drive for individual gain brings success.[56] Part of the challenge that the *Philoctetes* brings to bear on this is the confusion of the distinctions between friend and enemy, as Philoctetes becomes increasingly difficult to place in the latter category. In the *Histories*, Darius defended falsehood in the context of an attack on an unambiguous enemy, the False Smerdis, but did so in general terms after voicing a willingness to betray the Persians.[57]

In crafting Odysseus' persuasive oratory around egoism, Sophocles is in dialogue with the *Philoctetes* of Euripides, which had been performed in 431 BCE.[58] In the tragedy, a Trojan embassy that arrived on Lemnos promised Philoctetes that they would give him money and make him a ruler if he were willing to join the Trojans. A disguised Odysseus opposes the betrayal of the Greeks in the knowledge that Troy could not be captured without the hero and his bow on their side. One fragment captures the rhetorical basis on which the Trojans made their case to Philoctetes, with gain as a prime motivator.

> You see that even among the gods it is noble to gain (κερδαίνειν καλόν), | and the god with the most gold in their temple | is admired. What then stops you from taking | gain (κέρδος), since it is possible, and assimilating yourself to the gods (κἀξομοιοῦσθαι θεοῖς)? (*TrGF* F 794 Kannicht)

Again, *kerdos* is expected to spur morally dubious action, in this case, Philoctetes' disloyalty to the Greek cause.[59] It does so by an analogy with the admirable wealth of the gods and the profit of humans. In addition to the Trojan message of self-enrichment, the comparison of the life of the divine with that of mere mortals points to the distorted nature of the sentiment.

Odysseus' response to the Trojan is telling, as he seems to counter the notion of self-interest by setting it in a wider political context. Odysseus says he speaks because he considers it shameful to remain silent "on behalf of the whole Greek army" (*TrGF* F 796 Kannicht: ὑπέρ ... παντὸς Ἑλλήνων στρατοῦ). Even if only in the service of persuasive speech,

[56] For a recent discussion of the interaction between Sophocles' Oedipus and Herodotus' Periander, see Finglass (2018), and on the difficulty in charting the tragedian and Herodotus' influence over one another, 75.

[57] But for the notion that justice obtains even with the enemy, see adesp. F 5: ἐχθρὸς μὲν ἀνήρ, ἀλλὰ τὴν Δίκην σέβω. ("The man is an enemy, but I honour Justice.").

[58] For which, see Scodel (2009), 50–5.

[59] Olson (1991), 275, "The Trojans' offer is sophistic in the worst sense of the word."

Odysseus counters Philoctetes' self-interest with the interests of the Greeks as a whole.[60]

Sophocles returns to the moral ambiguity of false speech explicitly elsewhere. In the *Electra*, Apollo decrees that Orestes will only be able to exact vengeance with "snares" (37: δόλοισι). At the beginning of the tragedy and in advance of a false report of Orestes' death that is delivered to his mother, Orestes reflects on the stratagem: "what does it grieve me, if dying in words I am saved by deeds and win glory? I suppose that no speech with gain is base" (59–61: λόγῳ θανὼν | ἔργοισι σωθῶ κἀξενέγκωμαι κλέος | δοκῶ μέν, οὐδὲν ῥῆμα σὺν κέρδει κακόν).[61] For Orestes, as in several of the other examples above, the cleavage of speech from deeds renders it trifling. After all, he has been sent by the god Apollo and refers to his own mission as operating with "justice" (70: δίκῃ). As above, in the case of Sophocles' Odysseus, social context is relevant. Unlike Odysseus, Orestes deceives his true enemies – but also his loyal sister. Still, here too there is evidence that his heroism is being interrogated, since Orestes universalizes in his avowal that speech is ultimately always directed by gain.[62] This is clearly how later readers such as Athenaeus conceived it; he included it in those things said basely by the poets and prose writers.[63]

Egoism and Political Participation

As the above passages demonstrate, fifth-century intellectual culture contemplates questions relating to self-interest and its clash with moral norms such as the injunction against falsehood. This tradition goes some way to contextualizing Herodotus' exploration of these themes in the speeches of Darius, Otanes, and Prexaspes. On the surface, Darius emerges as an agitator of Persian tradition by departing from the ethnographic imperative against falsehood. Yet the *Histories* has already undermined this apparent practice by portraying the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses as rife with deception, with victory as its own justification. In his pursuit of individual gain then, Darius represents their successor. Otanes and Prexaspes serve as foils to this position: Otanes, in his stress on participation and

[60] That he impersonates being a follower of his enemy, Palamedes, undermines the sincerity of this speech.

[61] Cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1051, where a similar scenario is played out by Helen's report of her husband's death. Menelaus' response is: κακὸς μὲν ὄρνις· εἰ δὲ κερδανῶ, λέγε. ("It's ill-omened; but if I am to gain from it, say it.")

[62] Soph. *El.* 61. Cf. Eur. *Hel.* 1050–2.

[63] Ath. 3.94. Hesk (2000), 199, views his deceit as "unequivocally dark and callous."

collaboration; Prexaspes, in his rejection of individual gain and reliance upon the truth. Taken together, these three raise issues surrounding the compatibility of the monarch's egoism with civic participation.

It is the Constitutional Debate that crystallizes the opposition of the one and the many.[64] It reprises the contest between Otanes and Darius prior to the overthrow of the False Smerdis. For Otanes, the flaws in monarchy are systemic rather than unique to a single individual; on his account, the institution creates a negative feedback loop with the populace that leads to instability. Instead of the unjust and depraved individual ruler, Otanes endorses the multitude, in whom "everything is" (3.80.6). When Darius comes to speak in support of monarchy, he does so by looking to a hypothetical set of best democracies, oligarchies, and monarchies and settles on the rule of the best man as superior to the others. Reference to an ideal ruler allows Darius to offer up an image of the Persians as faultlessly governed by an individual with perfect judgment, something that the many and the few cannot hope to enjoy collectively. This rhetorical strategy bypasses the troubling aspects of recent history. It is the more distant past that serves Darius' purpose: he reminds the people of their acquisition of freedom from the Medes by Cyrus. Since they were "freed by one man" (3.82.5: ἐλευθερωθέντας διὰ ἕνα ἄνδρα), he holds, they should be ruled by one man. Of course, the Persians have lately been freed by a group of seven, but such pedantic consistency will not weigh Darius down.[65] With relative ease, Darius is able to recommit the Persians to monarchy in the Constitutional Debate. Even the method of the installation of the king disregards the more democratic options suggested by Otanes, by lot or by popular vote (3.83.2). If Otanes opens a vista onto an alternate Persia, it is just as swiftly closed off.

Individual gain through deception is a winning strategy for Darius following the Debate.[66] The seven conspirators choose to accept as king whoever's horse neighs first at sunrise in a designated area. To avoid leaving his success up to chance, Darius enlists his horse-keeper, a *sophos* named Oibares, in contriving a scheme (3.85.1–2: σοφίην; σόφισμα) to make the

[64] Rosen (1988), 41, states that through the conspiracy's success Herodotus affirms "that justice and freedom may depend on lies and murder," although Herodotus' commitment to the conspiracy's justness is not explicit.

[65] Pelling (2002), 130 n. 25 points out the way in which Darius' earlier support for lying complicates reading this speech as a sincere defense of one-man rule. Bringmann (1976), 276, finds Darius' arguments make the weaker argument the stronger and connects this to Herodotus' consistent characterization of the future King.

[66] With Evans (1991), 58; Pelling (2002), 131.

horse neigh. In his order, the future ruler returns to his emphasis on the importance of avoiding delay (μὴ ἀναβάλλεσθαι). Oibares is successful in his machinations and when Darius' horse neighs first, he becomes the next Great King.[67] Later, this horse and its rider will be memorialized in an equestrian statue with an inscription explaining their prominence in his acquisition of Persia by the ruse. This willingness to gain victory through deceit complements Darius' support of falsehood for gain in the pre-coup deliberations and goes a step further by memorializing it.[68]

Darius' pursuit of rugged self-interest has, however, negative implications for his role as ruler and for his subjects. The notion that individual advantage is its own justification and that falsehood and truth-telling aim at this leads to a breakdown in communication and to the inability to identify trustworthy and untrustworthy Persians. This is exemplified immediately after the overthrow of the False Smerdis. In what is Darius' first act as ruler, Herodotus relates that one of the seven conspirators, Intaphrenes, was put to death (3.118.1). After the installation of Darius on the throne, we are told that they had agreed to a *nomos* according to which any of the other six might meet with the king without advance notice, provided that the king was not with one of his wives. On one occasion in which Intaphrenes enters the palace to converse with the Great King, he is informed that he is with his wife and barred from entry. Intaphrenes believes that the attendants "spoke lies" to him (3.118.2: ψεύδεα λέγειν) and maims them horrifically as a punishment. When Darius receives his slaves and hears of this outrage, he immediately suspects the other five of having done this in league with Intaphrenes to overthrow his rule and orders them to come one by one to make a trial of their opinions on the vicious act. When satisfied that Intaphrenes has acted alone, Herodotus relates that the ruler seized not only Intaphrenes but all of his male relations, again on the grounds that a conspiracy to overthrow him is in the works. This paranoia has no basis in reality, of course, but like Intaphrenes, Darius distrusts the sincerity of those around him. In both cases, needless destruction is the consequence. The episode showcases just what the inability to distinguish truth and falsehood, friend and enemy, leads to.

Viewed in the context of sophistic discussion on self-interest, the interweaving of the episodes on Darius, Otanes, and Prexaspes do not

[67] The deception is again met with an intervention of the divine, as lightning and thunder appear in an otherwise blue sky, in a clear sign of favor (3.86.2: ὥσπερ ἐκ θεοῦ τευ).

[68] Benardete (1969), 84, notes that this gives rise to a double account of the ruse, itself a marker of the change in the Persian commitment to truth-telling as a result of the conspiracy.

point to the triumph of truth over falsehood or altruism over egoism. More ambiguously, they articulate a live debate on what the individual owes to the state and to the self. The power of the profit motive and its effects on civic engagement is readily evident in, for example, Athens' transition to democracy. After the Athenians are freed from the rule of the sons of Peisistratus, they quickly rise in martial prowess in relation to their neighbors. The cause of this rise in their fortunes is, according to the narrator, their new enfranchisement and ability to work on their own behalf: "so it's clear that when held down they were deliberately cowardly, as those working for a despot, while after they were freed each individual was eager to achieve something for himself" (5.78: δηλοῖ ὧν ταῦτα ὅτι κατεχόμενοι μὲν ἐθελοκάκεον ὡς δεσπότῃ ἐργαζόμενοι, ἐλευθερωθέντων δὲ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος ἑωυτῷ προεθυμέετό <τι> κατεργάζεσθαι). Herodotus might have formulated this in terms of an eagerness to work on behalf of the people or the institution of democracy, but instead it is the individual who is elevated through this institutional change.

An even more salient parallel to Darius is Themistocles, who continuously enriches himself, as his interests happen to overlap with those of Athens.[69] Emily Baragwanath has observed that initially the narrative presents Themistocles as a unifier and a driver of collective interest but that this gives way to a far more ambivalent presentation.[70] Before Artemisium, he accepts a bribe of thirty talents from the Euboeans with a promise to keep the Hellenic navy in place and fight in front of Euboea. To acquit himself of his obligation, Themistocles uses part of the sum to bribe the Spartan commander, Eurybiades, and another part to pay off the Corinthian commander, Adeimantus, allowing both to believe that they were funds from the Athenian state. Herodotus relates that by these means the Euboeans were gratified, the commanders fully persuaded, and "Themistocles himself made a profit" (8.5.3: αὐτός τε ὁ Θεμιστοκλέης ἐκέρδηνε).[71] After the Greek victory at Salamis, his deception continues. Beginning with Andros, Themistocles attempts to extort money for his own gain. Due to the poverty of the island, they refuse his request and are then besieged by the Greek fleet, in a campaign that initially fails but

[69] For bibliography on Themistocles in Herodotus, see Blösel (2001), 180 n. 7, 181 n. 8. I follow Fornara (1971), 66, who rejects the older tradition that read Themistocles' personality as fragmented and incoherent, for which, Masaracchia (1977).

[70] Baragwanath (2008), 291–8, 316, 318.

[71] Cf. his rhetoric at 8.60.γ. For this passage, see Blösel (2001), 182–3. At 186, he persuasively argues for the background of the Delian League as influencing Herodotus' account. He is following Fornara (1971), 86–7; Redfield (1985), 115; and Konstan (1987), 72.

eventually results in the establishment of an Athenian cleruchy on Andros, as the Greek audience would have well known.[72] This only enlarged Themistocles' appetite: "he did not cease from his desire for gain, and kept sending threatening words to the other islands, asking for money through the same messengers" (8.112.1: οὐ γὰρ ἐπαύετο πλεονεκτέων, ἐσπέμπων ἐς τὰς ἄλλας νήσους ἀπειλητηρίους λόγους αἴτεε χρήματα διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν ἀγγέλων). Threat of naval investment allowed Themistocles to enrich himself without the awareness of the Athenians, who he nonetheless represented for the islanders.[73] Themistocles' profit motive is fundamentally ambiguous.[74] Themistocles epitomises the dilemma of the profit drive. It is worth emphasizing precisely who he deceives – fellow Greeks who are not unequivocally the enemy. While unscrupulous, at times his agenda overlaps with that of Athens. Even when it does not, his self-interest generates benefits for the state. Like Darius, his rapacity is linked to imperial power and expansionism.

Unlike Athens, in Persia self-interest is the prerogative of the ruler. In this respect, Xerxes proves a worthy heir to his father's legacy. In the course of his march from Sardis, Xerxes stops at Abydos to survey his army and navy and turns to consult with his uncle and advisor, Artabanus, on the strength of their forces. Artabanus reacts with cautious words, indicating the dangers of adverse weather and finding food sufficient for their numbers. He urges fear in deliberation and boldness in action. Xerxes replies by extolling the value of swift action and its result – gain: "to those who wish to do something, on the whole gains usually are found, but to those who reckon up everything and delay, not much happens" (7.50.2: οἵσι τοίνυν βουλομένοισι ποιέειν ὡς τὸ ἐπίπαν φιλέει γίνεσθαι τὰ κέρδεα, τοῖσι δὲ ἐπιλεγομένοισί τε πάντα καὶ ὀκνέουσι οὐ μάλα ἐθέλει). In an echo of Darius, deliberation is coded to delay and speed to

[72] At 8.111.2, Themistocles brings the Andrians two divinities, Persuasion and Necessity; for Blösel (2001), 190, "Πειθώ and Ἀναγκαίη serve not only to give a name to the Herodotean Themistocles' pre-eminent qualities, but also and especially to point to demagogy and sheer violence as the decisive instruments of Athenian rule." Blösel interprets Themistocles' πλεονεξία as uniquely Athenian, by analogy with Thucydides 1.77.3–4 (though it should be noted that the Athenians are by no means the sole exponents of πλεονεξία in the *History*). The Andrian response at 8.111.2, in which the Athenians are μεγάλαι τε καὶ εὐδαίμονες καὶ θεῶν χρηστῶν ἥκοιεν εὖ ("great and prosperous, since they are so well off in useful gods"), is not an anachronism; it evokes both the language of Themistocles in his harangue at Salamis, 8.83.1 and also the Solon-Croeusus exchange at 1.30–2. I prefer the reading of Konstan (1987), 72, which sees not a narrative divide between the shrewdness and greed of Themistocles, as Blösel, but a unity.

[73] As noted by Munson (1988), 100; Blösel (2001), 196.

[74] The slippage between the terms "Athenians," "Greeks," and "Themistocles" is important. This behavior is in marked contradistinction to the assessment of the Greeks at 8.26.3.

profit.[75] There is an uncomfortable truth to this deduction. In any case, before Xerxes' march on Greece, the Great King is performing what has become a well-rehearsed script.[76]

Reading the *Histories* in the *Cyropaedia*: Xenophon and the Persian Profit Motive

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, another work that defies generic categorization, follows the life of Cyrus the Great and the rise of Persia's empire. As has long been recognized, this hybrid narrative history, philosophical dialogue, biography, and proto-novel is in dialogue with Herodotus' narration of the life of Cyrus in Book 1 of the *Histories*. Early in the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon engages creatively with Herodotus' portrayal of the Persians as committed to pedagogical truth-telling while having monarchs who regularly indulge in falsehood.[77] In doing so, he returns to the status of gain and its effect on the civic body.

During a journey to the border of Persia after Cyrus has been made general of the Median army, he discusses the art of military tactics and generalship with his father, Cambyses. Their exchange turns to the appropriate way to take advantage of an enemy, at which point Cambyses reveals that this entails becoming a "plotter, dissembler, treacherous, deceitful, a thief, robber, and greedy in every way" (1.6.27).[78] Even so, Cambyses assures his son that he would remain the "most just man and the most observant of the law" (1.6.28: δικαιότατός τε καὶ νομιμώτατος). Cyrus, unnerved by the paradox, asks why he and the rest of the Persian youths have not been instructed in how to undertake these actions. Cambyses explains that these juveniles have been trained in deception but that this has so far only been practiced on animals in the hunt. Even if Persian boys deal truly with men, they are still expected to use snares, tricks, and all other means of unfair advantage against animals. The distinctions between

[75] For the immediacy of gain, but the swiftness of retribution, see 6.86.γ1 on Glaucus' misplaced question to the oracle of Delphi.

[76] It is also familiar from Soph. *Phil.* 111: ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει. No Persian monarch comes to understand the danger of haste better than Cambyses. Just as he realized that the name of the upstart who declared himself ruler was Smerdis, Cambyses lamented the unnecessary assassination of his brother by exclaiming that he had acted "more hastily than wisely" (ταχύτερα ἢ σοφώτερα) in fear of losing his rule, 3.65.3.

[77] It also evokes a proposition argued in the *Dissoi Logoi* that it is just to lie and deceive, DK 90 B 3.2, as a higher justice obtains in the event of protecting one's intimates from themselves. For example, should a parent refuse to take medicine necessary for their health, or attempt to commit suicide, the text suggests that deception is justified. For the noble lie see Hesk (2000), 143–201.

[78] Cf. *Mem.* 3.1.6.

the appropriate action toward man and animal, he clarifies, will later map onto those of friends and enemies. When Cyrus again protests that his education has not prepared him to treat men – even enemies – this way, Cambyses replies with a developmental account of the Persian education system:

> "Well, son," he said, "there is a story among our ancestors that there was once a man who taught the youths, he taught them justice, just as you are suggesting, how not to lie and to lie (μὴ ψεύδεσθαι καὶ ψεύδεσθαι), how not to deceive and to deceive, how not to slander and to slander, how not to take advantage and to take advantage. He drew distinctions between what one should do to friends and to enemies. Additionally, he would teach that it was just to deceive friends for a good aim and to steal from friends for a good aim." (1.6.31)

For these Persian youths in the past, an education in justice was a holistic one that prepared them to encounter their enemies and to counteract the potential errors of their friends. To train them in the dark side of justice, the anonymous teacher had them practice upon one another, leading them to become proficient in deception and taking advantage. The unintended result of this is that, however, "they were perhaps becoming proficient too in being lovers of gain" (1.6.32: ἴσως δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὸ φιλοκερδεῖν οὐκ ἀφυεῖς ὄντες),[79] so that the division of actions directed toward friends and enemies was no longer maintained. This erosion of the civic fabric led to a new law (ῥήτρα) according to which the education of the Persians was now to consist of learning to tell the truth (ἀληθεύειν), not to deceive, and not to take advantage over others (1.6.33).[80] This mirrors the education of the enslaved in Persia, who are taught only this partial account of justice. Unlike them, when Persian youths reach maturity, as Cyrus has, they are able to learn the "customary practices" (1.6.34: νόμιμα) appropriate for dealing with the enemy. These precautions are designed to produce "tamer" (1.6.33: πρᾳότεροι) citizens to avoid their becoming "savage" (1.6.34: ἄγριοι) with one another, in a return to the animal analogy above, where the distinction of humans and beasts gave ground for instruction in taking advantage of the enemy.[81] As Jon Hesk has argued, Xenophon supports military deceit but refuses to have Cyrus educated in how to deceive friends because of the potential "behavioural fall-out amongst

[79] The lover of gain also elicited a strong reaction in Plato, who rejects him at *Resp.* 582e.
[80] For the significance of the *rhetra* as a Spartan term for law, see Gera (1993), 70; Hesk (2000), 132.
[81] With Hesk (2000), 130, 133–4.

citizens which would prove catastrophic for the community."[82] Cambyses' failure to tackle the justice of deceiving friends arises, on this account, from the populace's inability to maintain friend-enemy distinctions. The cause of this is not probed by Hesk, but Cambyses identifies it as "love of gain" (φιλοκερδεῖν). In the face of individual profit, in Persia friends and enemies cease to have meaning. The conclusion of the *Cyropaedia* reprises the theme in its analysis of the failings of Persia in Xenophon's own time: unlike their ancestors under Cyrus, these Persians are characterized by their "love of base gain" (8.8.18: αἰσχροκέρδεια).

In the *Histories*, Darius' speech leaves the issues surrounding Persian tradition, falsehood, and the profit motive highly charged but ambiguous. The audience is made aware of the complexity of moral action through Darius' rise to the Persian throne, but there is no explicit resolution to it. In his intervention in the education of Cyrus, Xenophon locates the origins of the tradition of truth-telling in the ancient history of Persia. His Socratic-style teacher's attempts to communicate the multifaceted nature of justice fail, leading to its simplification as "truth-telling," at least until one reaches maturity. Yet this naturalizes Herodotus' depiction of Persian deceit and lying as harking back to a more nuanced understanding of justice. As in Cambyses' speech in the *Cyropaedia*, in the *Histories* it is the profit motive that proves a catalyst of historical action. It leads to Darius' inability to distinguish friend and enemy, even as it evokes Otanes' complaint on the failure of the monarch to treat his subjects with any decency. Among Xenophon's ancient Persians too, profit corroded relations between citizens. More damningly, in the *Cyropaedia*, it has the potential to undercut Cyrus' successes: when Cyrus' father Cambyses returns to the stage in Book 8, he does so with a warning to his son against ruling the Persians as he does other nations – to his advantage (8.5.24: ἐπὶ πλεονεξίᾳ). Ruling Persian subjects this way, he warns, will only lead to ruin.

Conclusion

In advance of the revolt against the False Smerdis, the *Histories* orchestrates a philosophical debate on the profit motive and the rationalization of falsehood. The future Great King, Darius, offers an elaborate defense of *kerdos* and the necessity of lying to achieve the aims of the group of

[82] Hesk (2000), 134. Cf. Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.14–18 and Pl. *Resp.* 382c, where lying to enemies and to friends (in select cases) is acceptable.

conspirators. Lying, however, transgresses the Persians' abhorrence of falsehood as recorded in their ethnography. Darius' speech is sandwiched between Otanes' support of participatory action and Prexaspes' rejection of falsehood and self-interest, which suggest that Darius' words are not fully consonant with his fellow citizens' behaviors. In the end, falsehood is not required during the revolution, which suggests that the airing of the profit motive serves more to characterize Darius as heir to the problematic moral patrimony of Cyrus and Cambyses than to explain the downfall of the False Smerdis and his brother. In this instance, Darius' private interests overlap with those of Persia, much as Odysseus' do with Greece in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, and Themistocles' with Athens during the Greco-Persian Wars and their aftermath. Egoism, however, is not treated one-dimensionally as constructive. The distorting potential for the civic fabric in Darius' formulation is dramatized in the breakdown of communication that follows his establishment as king. If everyone aims for his own advantage and truth is but a means to an end, the position of the ruler and the ruled is unstable, as is the line dividing friend and enemy.

CHAPTER 4

History peri physeos

The term that is perhaps most closely associated with Presocratic inquiry is *physis*, often translated as "nature." From the late fifth century, the "inquiry into nature" is associated with sophists and philosophy – and with the study of causes, constitutions, existence, and death. According to Charles H. Kahn, it is the "catchword of the new philosophy."[1] It is regularly contrasted with custom, law, and convention (*nomos*), and in such instances *physis* is associated with truth, reality, necessity, animal life, and, at times, self-interest. This chapter looks to the emergence and evolution of the concept of *physis* and the *Histories*' incorporation of the term in its narrative. As we shall see, *physis* creates regular patterns in the natural world and has predictive value for the study of the past. It organizes categories including geology, wildlife, and the human into stable configurations and establishes a set of important limits for the inquirer. *Physis* also invites consideration of the relationship of nature to humanity. Select passages may suggest a causal connection between the physical world and human culture, in a form of environmental determinism. However, it will become clear that the *Histories* expresses no unequivocal support for the notion that the condition of man is dictated by environment. Ultimately, it subverts strict environmental determinism. Herodotus emerges from this analysis as a figure deeply implicated in the Presocratic preoccupation with *physis*, even as he innovates within this tradition.[2]

[1] Kahn (1960), 201; Pohlenz (1953), 426, "the concept of *physis* is a creation of Ionian science, in which they summed up their understanding of the world"; quoted by Guthrie (1962), 82.

[2] For studies on *physis* generally, see Classen (1863); Lovejoy (1909); Beardslee (1918); Veazie (1921); Thimme (1935); Holwerda (1955); Bremer (1989); Patzer (1993); Naddaf (2005); for treatments of Herodotus and *physis*, see Heinimann (1945); Corcella (1984), 74–84.

Early Greek *physis*

The first use of *physis* occurs in the *Odyssey*.[3] Odysseus comes upon the god Hermes in a sacred grove before reaching the home of Circe, where he intends to rescue his men, who have been unceremoniously turned into swine. In the course of the god-meets-mortal set piece, Hermes ensures Odysseus' escape from inevitable defeat by digging up "moly," a drug to protect the hero against the destructive magical powers of Circe:

> So, having said this, the Argus-killer gave me the drug, | pulling it from the earth, and he explained its *physis* to me (ἐκ γαίης ἐρύσας καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειξε). | Its root was black, its bloom like milk. | The gods call it "moly," and it is indeed difficult | for mortal men to dig up. But the gods are capable of all. (10.302–6)

Scholars continue to debate the precise meaning of this, the earliest instantiation of *physis*. According to Felix Heinimann, it refers to the exterior appearance of the plant, as the term *phue* does, which is common in Homer.[4] Conversely, Howard Jones has suggested it is the *process* of growing;[5] Émile Benveniste interprets it as the "realization of a becoming" or the nature of the thing realized entirely.[6] And Charles Kahn proposes that it is "its bodily form at maturity" rather than growth.[7] Alfred Heubeck adds that it means "hidden power" on the basis of the verb δεικνύναι (*deiknunai*).[8] With just a single passage in the epic it is difficult to reject or confirm the analysis of any single definition. A conservative position would certainly connect it to appearance, as this is described immediately afterward. Whether it encompasses processes of growth and hiddenness at this date is less obvious and must remain conjectural without additional evidence.

Presocratic philosophers around the turn of the fifth century begin to employ *physis* with increasing frequency in relation to their inquiries.[9] At the start of Heraclitus' philosophical treatise, conventionally called *On*

[3] For discussion of this passage, cf. Lovejoy (1909), 376; Beardslee (1918), 6; Holwerda (1955); Kahn (1960), 201; Clay (1972); Jones (1973), 16–17; Naddaf (2005), 13–14.
[4] Heinimann (1945), 16–17.
[5] Jones (1973), 16, "What Hermes actually points out to Odysseus is not the supernatural qualities of the plant, but the visible characteristics of it: the black root and white blossom." And again, "What Odysseus was actually shown was the way in which the plant was growing as manifested by its outward appearance: he was shown, in fact, the *process of growing*."
[6] Benveniste (1948). [7] Kahn (1960), 201 n. 1.
[8] Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989), 60: 10.302–6. [9] See the Word-Index in DK, s.v. φύσις.

Nature – though this title is unlikely to have been original[10] – the philosopher explains his method of inquiry. As G. S. Kirk translates, "I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is" (DK 22 B 1: κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει).[11] While definitions of *physis* vary, Kirk is persuasive in his translation of it as "real constitution."[12] On his reading, *physis* connotes a disposition or an organization of various parts, which in turn leads to behavioral norms. Kahn specifies further that the word signifies the "genuine nature or structure of a thing" and as such positions Heraclitus as a rival purveyor of wisdom among philosophers exploring the world order.[13] Another fragment of his states that *physis* likes to hide itself (B 123), a tendency that necessitates Heraclitus' disclosures. Kahn's translation is supported by the subsequent references to the concept in the extant fragments of his treatise. He chastises Hesiod for not knowing that the *physis* of each day is one, with no good or bad days (B 57); for Heraclitus, the structure of "day" is uniform, and this can admit no internal variation. This use suggests a clear departure from the focus in epic on the exterior form of the object. Elsewhere, he declares it wisdom to act with a knowledge that accords with *physis* (B 112); this formulation sets *physis* within the sphere of the human.[14]

Parmenides too incorporates *physis* into his *historie* – probably in the second half of his work, the *Doxa* (DK 28 B 10).[15] As Hermes had explained *physis* for Odysseus, so too the mouthpiece of Parmenides' philosophy, the goddess, promises the youth she will give him knowledge of the aethereal *physis* – or the constitution of the heavens. The goddess specifies that this will comprise knowledge of the signs in the heavens; the brilliant, destructive works of the sun; and the genesis of these things. Elsewhere, Parmenides bridges the human body and thought by using *physis* as an agent. He argues that the mixture of the limbs corresponds to human cognition, "for it is the same thing that the human frame of *physis* apprehends, both for all and for each individual, for thought preponderates" (DK 28 B 16: τὸ γὰρ αὐτό | ἔστιν ὅπερ φρονέει μελέων φύσις

[10] It was current as a description in the fifth century, see Hippoc. *de Carn.* 15; *VM* 20; but Schmalzriedt (1970) convincingly argues that the Alexandrian scholars assigned the title indiscriminately to Presocratic philosophers' works, while early Presocratics would not have used them.

[11] Kirk (1954), 33. The programmatic fragment is connected to Herodotus' project by Walter (2017), 161.

[12] See Kirk (1954), 42–3, 228–31. It is adopted by Robinson (1987), F 1 at 11.

[13] Kahn (1979), 99. [14] Cf. too B 123. Heraclitus and *physis* is discussed by Hülsz (2013).

[15] Though for an argument on the placement of B 10 in the *Aletheia*, see Bicknell (1967), 3, 16.

ἀνθρώποισιν | καὶ πᾶσιν καὶ παντί· τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἐστὶ νόημα).[16] Any potential for mind-body dualism is undercut by the grounding of *physis* in the corporeality of the body, itself the vehicle for thought. This passage also points to the stability of human *physis*. As a conceptual category, it operates in the same way for humankind, without exception.

Likewise, Empedocles embeds in his philosophy a theory of epistemology that includes a reference to *physis*:

> For if you fix them firmly in your crowded mind | and kindly attend with pure efforts, | all these things will be with you always through life, | and you will take many things from them, for these things themselves increase | in each character, according to the *physis* of each individual (ταῦτ' εἰς ἦθος ἕκαστον, ὅπη φύσις ἐστὶν ἑκάστῳ). | If you should extend yourself for what is of a different kind, | for the myriad trifles beside men that blunt thought, | then yes, they will quickly abandon you, as time cycles by, | desirous of their own kind, to arrive at a race like themselves; | know that all possesses thought and a share of the guiding power. (DK 31 B 110)

As in Parmenides, *physis* serves to demystify epistemology. Empedocles' philosophical program calls for the integration of "these things" (σφ'; αὐτά) – meaning the previous sentiments on the four roots and the influence of Love and Strife – in the mind of his interlocutor, Pausanias.[17] Their incorporation will shape Pausanias' *ethos*, or character, according to *physis*, leading to his improvement.[18] Empedocles triangulates, then, ideas, cognition, and character. The *physis* of the individual – conceived again as a strong agential force – will determine the acceptance of arguments and plays an important role in self-fashioning. It is figured as an elastic state molded in response to one's information diet, but it also exercises control over the acquisition of new knowledge. Empedocles holds that his philosophy can only be integrated properly if its host has sought out what is elevated – it cannot abide in a habitat that is vile (δειλά). Like is akin to like. Man's constitution emerges as an interdependent structure responsive to external stimuli. The prominent position that Empedocles awards *physis* in the processing of information points to its rising value as a heuristic.

The Milesian and subsequent Presocratic thinkers who analyzed *physis* move incontrovertibly beyond appearance and naturally occurring

[16] See Vlastos (1946).
[17] Trepanier (2004), 66. Long (1966); Kamtekar (2009) interprets this fragment as working on the basis of analogical reasoning whereby one recognizes "X by X."
[18] Wright (1981), 258–61.

phenomena.[19] This marks a shift from the preceding epic tradition – or, in the words of Lloyd:

> *We* should certainly not imagine that Homer and Hesiod and the audience for whom they composed were somehow unaware of the regularities of what we call natural phenomena ... but first there is a fundamental difference between an implicit assumption and an explicit concept. (2005), 133–4

The ubiquity of *physis* as a *topos* in Presocratic philosophy is assured by its presence in popular lampooning, as displayed, for example, in the *Clouds*.[20] It may have been satirized even earlier, if an extant fragment of the Syracusan comic poet Epicharmus (fl. ca. 480–470) is accepted as authentic. In the fragment, a character parodies the new fetish of inquiring into the nature of man with the words, "Then what is the *physis* of men? Bloated bladders!"[21] As the comic poet registers, man's *physis* comes increasingly under the microscope in the fifth century in sophistic and medical texts.

Herodotus' *peri physeos*

If "appearance" was in fact *physis*' primary meaning in the *Odyssey*, it is plain from even the scanty remains of the Presocratic philosophers that by the mid-fifth century its semantic range had expanded beyond this. Yet, despite Herodotus' position as the only substantially surviving Presocratic author, this feature of his narrative has received little attention.[22] The neglect can be traced to two separate scholarly tendencies of the twentieth century. The first was to connect the intellectual concerns of the *Histories*

[19] Despite the related verb φύομαι, and its primary meaning "grow," the noun is only seldom connected with growth in philosophical texts, cf. DK 31 B 8.1, and the discussion in Kirk (1954), 228–31. For the verb in Herodotus, see Powell, s.v. φύομαι, whose perfect stem is also used eight times as "to be so by nature" and used equally of the "natural" (i.e., biological) and human world.

[20] On eleven occasions; Aristophanes uses the term twice as often here as in his other comedies, a fact that supports reading it as a term associated with Presocratic philosophy. See Heinimann (1945), 107.

[21] F 10 *PCG*: ἆ γα φύσις ἀνδρῶν τί ὦν; ἀσκοὶ πεφυσιαμένοι. Cf. also F 2, which is interpreted as a parody of Heraclitus' theory of flux in terms of human *physis*, though this fragment is doubted by Kirk (1954), 146. For the relationship of Epicharmus to philosophy, Nestle (1902); Gigante (1953); Pickard-Cambridge (1962), 247–55; Barnes (1979), i.74, 87–8, 106–7; Alvarez Salas (2007), 23–72; Rodríguez-Noriega Guillén (2012), 87–95.

[22] For exceptions, see Heinimann (1945); Corcella (1984), 74–84. For human nature as a causal explanation in historiography, see Reinhold (1985), *passim*.

more closely with predecessors than contemporaries.[23] So, according to Heinimann in his monumental work on *nomos* and *physis*, "There is no doubt that Herodotus stands closer to this conception of an archaic way of thinking."[24] An additional cause of the neglect has been Herodotus' ambiguous position in the *nomos-physis* debate that dominates scholarly attention in discussions of *physis*.[25] It is often doubted whether Herodotus was in fact part of that conversation; Max Pohlenz, for example, writing in response to Heinimann's seminal investigation, found Heinimann's conclusions on Herodotus and *physis* misleading. According to Pohlenz, the *Histories* predates the *nomos-physis* debate.[26] On this reading, when Herodotus does use the language of *physis*, he connects it to land, a tendency of early ethnography.[27] He finds that the *Histories* employs the term for human beings only rarely, as at 2.35.2, where the text states that the *nomoi* of Egyptians are to be understood as arising from their land's *physis*. Pohlenz continues with the reservation, "But he [Herodotus] does this only in this passage, and there is not the slightest evidence to suggest that this was done generally in ethnography before Hippocrates."[28] In the apparent absence of any opposition between *nomos* and *physis* in the *Histories*, the work that *physis* does becomes irrelevant.

If we turn to the *Histories*, *physis* in fact occurs in the context of humans and the physical world. Land, rivers, animals, elements, and men are all described as possessing a given "nature." As has been observed in prior scholarship, Herodotus' exploration of Egypt attests the significance of this as an index of *historie*.[29] Herodotus' inquiry there first aimed at its

[23] As argued especially by Thomas (2000), 5–8; Raaflaub (2004), 234.

[24] Heinimann (1945), 24: "Es ist kein Zweifel, daß Herodot mit dieser Auffassung der archaischen Denkweise nähersteht."

[25] For the *nomos-physis* debate generally, see Guthrie (1969), 55–134; Kerferd (1981), 111–30; Ostwald (1986), 250–73. Winton (2000), 98, is typical in his assertion: "The contrast between *nomos* and *physis* . . . constitutes the single most fertile and most influential idea to emerge in fifth-century Greece." For an excellent analysis of the debate in Democritus and Plato, see Taylor (2007).

[26] A similarly reductionist view, though in contradistinction to Thucydides' complexity, can be found in Reinhold (2002), 46, "the first to use the concept of human nature as a motive force in history was not Herodotus, but Thucydides." At 117 n. 6, he explains "Herodotus was the first to use the term, but he employed it merely to indicate the limits of human beings." See also Evans (1991), 23, on Herodotus: "[*Nomos*] is not the antithesis of *physis*." For a positive judgment on Herodotus, *nomos*, and *physis*, Hunter (1982), 264–77.

[27] An alternative but related position was to reject the importance of the term in the *Histories*, see, e.g., Evans (1991), 24, "*Physis* was in no sense a technical word: it might refer to the appearance of the hippopotamus, the life cycle of the crocodile, or the physical stature of man."

[28] Pohlenz (1953), 425, "Aber das tut er nur an dieser einen Stelle, und nicht das geringste Anzeichen spricht dafür, daß dies schon vor Hippokrates grundsätzlich in der Ethnographie geschehen sei."

[29] For Herodotus on Egypt, see generally A. Lloyd (1975); Froidefond (1971), 115–207; Vasunia (2001), 75–109; Moyer (2011), 42–83. The Egyptians represent for Herodotus a petri dish par

geological and aquatic ecology. Egypt represented an earth science laboratory, a position that underwrites the narrator's assertion that it possessed "the most wonders and works superior to description" (2.35.1). At the start of Book 2 and the Egyptian *logos*, Herodotus' discussion turned immediately to the physical features of Egyptian land (2.5.2: Αἰγύπτου γὰρ φύσις ἐστὶ τῆς χώρης τοιήδε, "the nature of Egypt's land is like this"). Like Heraclitus, Herodotus carefully sets out *physis* as the conceptual guide to his inquiry. Immediately following this, he elaborates a series of proofs to support the thesis that the existing geomorphology of Egypt is a recent phenomenon, a product of the extended silting from the Nile. Previously, Herodotus explains, the area below Lake Moeris was underwater. Geomorphological change is not visible to the eye, however, so the thesis is supported by a hypothetical offshore excursion to test the muddy bottom of the water in order to illustrate the reality of the silting process: a day's sail away would reveal to one that a piece of lead cast into the sea would only sink eleven fathoms before hitting mud.[30] This theoretical voyage transitions into a discussion on the length of the coast, the range of the interior hinterland, and the type of earth – flat and muddy – to be found in Egypt and the mountain ranges that ring it. This usage challenges the early references to *physis* as appearance or growth. It encompasses external features as well as internal ones and has a role in determining human events as well as the natural world. It is best translated as "nature" or "natural constitution" in the *Histories*.[31]

The opening is bookended by ring composition, with "such is this land's constitution" (2.9.1: πέφυκε μέν νυν ἡ χώρη αὕτη οὕτως).[32] Egypt's *physis* is shielded from view and requires the penetrating gaze of the narrator to expose its hidden constitution, as Heraclitus had declared. Importantly, an element of the *physis* of the land is its dynamism – silting

excellence for *historie*, cf. Luraghi (2001b), 152. Donadoni (1947), 205, notes in passing that Herodotus envisions Egypt as utopian; and Hartog (2001), 47, sees Egypt as a space "back in time" for the Greek traveler of the sixth-fifth centuries; as does Vasunia (2001), 115–16.

[30] 2.5–6. *Physis* often covers the features not subject to direct autopsy as well as those which are; in this way, Herodotus corresponds to Heraclitus' dictum: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ (DK 22 B 123), that "nature likes to hide itself," with Corcella (1984), 76.

[31] Corcella (1984), 75; with Falus (1977), 371. Cf. the *physis* of the crocodile at 2.68.1, which includes not simply its physical appearance but its living and feeding habits, its habitat, reproductive processes, its physical development, its interaction with other animals, both positive (with the trochilus) and negative (everything else), and its position respective to the Egyptian people as either sacred or otherwise. Human *nomoi* affect behavior toward the animal as recorded by Herodotus. Observations on *physis*, as is evident, are not limited to the exterior of the object of inquiry.

[32] For ring-composition in the *Histories*, Fränkel (1955), 71 n. 4; Immerwahr (1966); Beck (1971); de Jong (2002); for the metanarrative function of such signposting, see Munson (2001), 20–44.

increases the landmass relative to the passage of time. The country is in an ongoing state of change, transforming itself from a moist swampland to dry, flat earth.[33] Its constitution is reminiscent of Anaximander's comments on the formation of the earth:

> For at first, they say, the entire area around the earth was liquid, but as it was drying under the sun, one part of it evaporated and created winds and movements of the sun and the moon, while the remaining part became the sea. Whence they believe that the sea becomes smaller as it dries out and one day all of it will eventually become land. (DK 12 A 27)

Herodotus is likely adopting the theories of Anaximander here and in his discussion of the consequences of Egypt's *physis*:[34]

> εἴ σφι θέλοι, ὡς καὶ πρότερον εἶπον, ἡ χώρη ἡ ἔνερθε Μέμφιος (αὕτη γὰρ ἐστὶ ἡ αὐξανομένη) κατὰ λόγον τοῦ παροιχομένου χρόνου ἐς ὕψος αὐξάνεσθαι, ἄλλο τι ἢ οἱ ταύτῃ οἰκέοντες Αἰγυπτίων πεινήσουσι (2.14.1)
>
> If the land that is below Memphis – which is increasing – should increase in height, as I said before, proportionally as it has in the past, what else will happen to those Egyptians inhabiting the region but that they will starve?

The points of contact with the philosophers are conspicuous. First, in its focus on empirical phenomena, Herodotus' recounting of Egyptian geology is comparable to Parmenides' promise to disclose the science of the heavens. Herodotus' argument on silting in Egypt consists of a hypothetical in a conditional statement, affirmed with a first-person backward reference, and is supported by explaining the conditions under which the hypothetical obtains. The conclusion propels the theoretical event into a distant future through a rhetorical question that relies on inductive reasoning.[35] Thematically, it is the language of *physis*, associated as it is with the intellectual circles of the Presocratic thinkers, that gives Herodotus the conceptual toolkit to demonstrate the geological sophistication that he does. It is the

[33] A. Lloyd (1975), 137, Herodotus refers to the Egyptian land as the "gift of the river" (2.5.1), which derives from Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F 301, though the proofs are substantially Herodotus'. Silting occurs in Greece as well, around Troy, Teuthrania, Ephesus, and the Maeander plain, while the Achelous in Acarnania bridged the Echinades islands, 2.10.

[34] He may be silently correcting Xenophanes' conception of earth as mixing with sea and being dissolved by increasing moisture (DK 21 A 33) with the same piece of evidence: seashells, Hdt. 2.12.1.

[35] For these elements as distinctive to early philosophical and sophistic writing, see Thesleff (1966); Poulakos (1983); Consigny (1992). I do not accept that "sophistic rhetoric" is a mirage, contra Schiappa (1991b). This depends on an overly rigid schematization of what are broad stylistic trends in fifth-century intellectual culture.

predictability of evaporation that clarifies its dynamic constitution, not its external appearance. By applying the findings familiar from Presocratic thinkers such as Anaximander on the origin and evolution of landmasses, Herodotus demonstrates the explanatory power of their inquiry for his narrative, even as he stakes out a place as one capable of applying those inquiries to new contexts for his own purposes.

As we saw in Chapter 1, Herodotus' most famous eristic exchange is with his Presocratic predecessors and contemporaries on the subject of the Nile. His conclusion indicates that the environment is a system of interdependence, with the wind and the sun entangled in the behavior of the Nile. Again, he flags the importance of *physis*.[36] The Nile floods in summer rather than winter, contravening the behavior of all other rivers. Its providential flooding eliminates the need for agricultural labor and allows Egyptians to produce their harvest with almost no effort, in a nod to Golden Age man's capacity to live without toil due to the earth's unstinting supply of good things.[37] Despite inquiries into its alien nature, Herodotus is stymied: "as to the *physis* of the Nile, I was unable to ascertain anything from the priests or anyone else" (2.19.1).[38] Here the meaning of the term narrows and clearly refers not to the external form of the river, as this is observable, but instead to the obscure mechanism of its irregular current. The narrator produces three theories on its unique hydrological cycle, and although Herodotus does not name the authors of these hypotheses, there is evidence connecting them to Thales, Hecataeus, and Anaxagoras.[39] They attributed its *physis* to the Etesian winds, Ocean, and melting snows. After discarding these theories, Herodotus offers his explanation that evaporation takes place in winter in Egypt due to wind taking the sun from its regular position in the sky.[40]

[36] For the prominence of the natural wonder, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides each give an account of its sources: Aesch. F 300 Radt; Soph. F 882 Radt; Eur. *Hel.* 1–3, and F 228 Kannicht; Sen. *Q. Nat.* 4a.2.16 = DK 59 A 91. For Herodotus and the Nile, see A. Lloyd (1975), 91–107; Corcella (1984), 77–82; Thomas (2000), 136–9; and most recently, Graham (2003). A fascinating genealogy of the question of the Nile's source and swelling is found at Diod. Sic. 1.37–41.

[37] Cf. Hes. *Op.* 116–20; alternatively, for the state of man in Hesiod's day as full of toil, see, e.g., *Op.* 91–3.

[38] At 2.19.3, Hdt. expresses the same frustration, τούτων ὧν πέρι οὐδενὸς οὐδὲν οἷός τε ἐγενόμην παραλαβεῖν παρὰ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, ἱστορέων αὐτοὺς ἥντινα δύναμιν ἔχει ὁ Νεῖλος τὰ ἔμπαλιν πεφυκέναι τῶν ἄλλων ποταμῶν. ("Concerning these things, although I inquired of them what quality the Nile had that made it by nature the opposite of all other rivers, I was unable to ascertain this from any of the Egyptians.")

[39] For this passage, see Graham (2003).

[40] Evaporation is a prominent explanation in the Presocratic authors: see Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella, 2.25.1 for bibliography.

This keeps the Nile from overflowing in winter.[41] The structure of the argument, in its overturning of rival theories, evokes contemporary philosophical practice.[42] Herodotus' original thesis aspires to impress the same audience as those listening to Thales, Hecataeus, and Anaxagoras and to accrue the same cachet.

Yet in line with the increasing focus on anthropocentric inquiry in this period, Herodotus also sets *physis* in relation to human habits and customs by drawing attention to the ambiguous homology between Egyptian climate, hydrology, and culture:

> Αἰγύπτιοι ἅμα τῷ οὐρανῷ τῷ κατὰ σφέας ἐόντι ἑτεροίῳ καὶ τῷ ποταμῷ φύσιν ἀλλοίην παρεχομένῳ ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι ποταμοί, τὰ πολλὰ πάντα ἔμπαλιν τοῖσι ἄλλοισι ἀνθρώποισι ἐστήσαντο ἤθεά τε καὶ νόμους· (2.35.2)
>
> As with their climate, which is distinctive to them, and their river, which has a constitution that is different from other rivers, so the Egyptians have made both their habits and customs the opposite in many respects to others.

The connection drawn here between the Egyptian climate and the constitution of the river, which act in ways particular to the region, depends upon Herodotus' argument on the relationship of meteorology to the flooding of the Nile.[43] Climate's influence on the Nile parallels the Egyptians' establishment of customs opposite other peoples. But it is the environmental system that offers insight into the behavior of humanity, not the other way around.

The homology raises the inevitable question: does *physis* influence custom?[44] Is humanity part of the interdependent system theorized by

[41] It is thus opposite to the Ister, which exhibits a unique *physis* in that its channel flows the same in both summer and winter. Herodotus explains this as occurring due to the snow in winter, which makes it a little greater than its true constitution, while the excessive summer rain combined with evaporation maintains the levels of its current, 4.50.2.

[42] E.g., Heraclitus' critiques of Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hecataeus at DK 22 B 40; Homer and Archilochus at B 42; Hesiod at B 57 and 106. See also the comments of Thomas (2017), 568.

[43] For this passage, see Thomas (2000), 124–5. See also Soph. *OC* 337–8: ὦ πάντ' ἐκείνω τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ νόμοις | φύσιν κατεικασθέντε καὶ βίου τροφάς. ("Those two have become altogether assimilated to the *nomoi* in Egypt, in their *physis* and way of life"). The *physis* of Oedipus is said to be capable of alteration by the spell of friends, *OC* 1194; cf. also Soph. *Aj.* 548–9, where *physis* is not innate but shaped by *nomoi*.

[44] Again, cf. DK 31 B 110: αὐτὰ γὰρ αὔξει ταῦτ' εἰς ἦθος ἕκαστον, ὅπη φύσις ἐστὶν ἑκάστῳ. For its interpretation as environmental determinism in the *Histories*, see Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella 2.35.2; Redfield (1985); for responses against these and over-schematization in general, see Pelling (1997); Thomas (2000), 86–98, 103–14; Chiasson (2001), 56–68.

Herodotus? First, it is important to note that *physis* in the fifth century seldom refers to "Nature" as a uniform, rational force operating in the world.[45] It is more often localized, attached to an object such as, in this case, the Nile. Herodotus associates the Nile's *physis* with the country's weather patterns, but climate and aquatic geography's participation in the human sphere of culture is more ambiguous. The comment may be merely provocative – correlation and not causation.[46] Lateiner is likely correct in holding that this statement does not commit Herodotus to a strong view of determinism by which men are like plants, predetermined by their environmental conditions.[47] Still, given the period in which Herodotus is writing, in which *physis* begins to refer to natural history and to bear on ethical questions relating to the human, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is not simply a flippant aside or an accidental echo of Presocratic thought but that Herodotus is gesturing toward the investigation into humanity's place in the natural world.

For some thinkers, this does entail dependence. Aeschylus' *Suppliants* makes a comparison that is evocative of Herodotus. Danaus requests that a group of attendants from Athens accompany him and his daughters because "the *physis* of my shape is not alike, for the Nile rears a race not similar to that of Inachus" (496–8: μορφῆς δ' οὐχ ὁμόστολος φύσις. | Νεῖλος γὰρ οὐχ ὅμοιον Ἰνάχῳ γένος | τρέφει), and he fears unwitting violence from the citizens because of this.[48] Again, the Nile is implicated in the production of human difference – in this case, racial difference – with man conceived of as a product of nature.

Herodotus' connection of *physis* with human institutions allows him to raise a vitally important question in the fifth century: to what extent is the human conceived of as a product of his unique environment? As for Egypt, the question is left open: environment, *ethea*, and *nomoi* may participate in a reciprocal relationship, but the conditions under which this occurs are left unclear.[49]

[45] For exceptions to this general rule, see DK 59 A 30; DK 44 B 1.

[46] Thomas (2000), 103, 112, sees this passage as misleading with respect to Herodotus' larger narrative aims.

[47] Lateiner (1989), 158. See also Chiasson (2001), 57–8, who rightly points to the caution in Herodotus' formulation.

[48] Elsewhere, Aeschylus refers to *physis* in terms of Persian strength, *Pers*. 441; a herald reports that the sun nourishes the *physis* of the earth at *Ag*. 633; and at *Cho*. 281, infernal disease is said to eat away at one's "old constitution" (ἀρχαίαν φύσιν).

[49] His implicit comparison is activated by the narratee: see Munson (2001), 71, "reconstruction of analogical networks is almost entirely dependent on the interpretative operations of the listener."

The fifth-century philosophers evidently explored the entanglement of man's *physis* and the natural world. The anonymous author of the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* is perhaps the best evidence for this.[50] In the text, mankind is autochthonous, sprung from the earth, and so resembles in physique the landscapes that gave rise to him: "for the most part you will find that the physiques and habits of men follow the *physis* of their land" (*Aer.* 24: εὑρήσεις γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῆς χώρης τῇ φύσει ἀκολουθέοντα καὶ τὰ εἴδεα τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τοὺς τρόπους). The assimilation of man to landscape supports some degree of determinism. That is, humans are subject to the influence of their natural environment.

In the treatise, the elasticity of human *physis* is connected not only to geographical changes but also to human *nomoi*, a phenomenon particularly evident in a long excursus devoted to the "Longheads" (14). The Longheads turn culture into *physis* by correcting for the undesirable roundness of the cranium. Upon birth, the skull is immediately molded into a more suitably elongated shape and then bound until it remains in place. Generations later, this *nomos* becomes a trait in the *physis* of the people, "So in the beginning *nomos* acquired it by labour, resulting in the fact that such a *physis* arose by way of compulsion" (*Aer.* 14: οὕτως τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ νόμος κατειργάσατο, ὥστε ὑπὸ βίης τοιαύτην τὴν φύσιν γενέσθαι). Euripides composes a similar sentiment in the *Bacchae* in a comment on the divine, which is described as "what is *nomimos* for a long span of time and is ever there by nature" (895–6: τό τ᾽ ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ νόμιμον | ἀεὶ φύσει τε πεφυκός).[51] Among these authors, culture is in dynamic interrelation with and even determines nature.

Noteworthy is the stark dichotomy in *Airs* between the *physis* of individuals in Asia and Europe. There, the *physis* of what grows from the earth and that of humans in Asia are interactive, with the added information that these differ greatly from plant and human *physis* in Europe.[52] This is largely, though not entirely, attributed to the environment.[53] Asiatic peoples are grown in a hothouse of eternal spring; theirs is a coddled

[50] For a discussion of Hippoc. *Aer.*, generally, see Grensemann (1979); Calame (1986), 85–99. The dating of *Aer.* is widely taken to be roughly contemporaneous with Herodotus, e.g., Jouanna's edition of the Budé (1996), suggests 430/20 BCE. The best treatment of *Aer.* in relation to Herodotus is now Thomas (2000), *passim*, especially 86–98.

[51] For the opposition of *nomos* and *physis* in the *Hippolytus*, see Berns (1973).

[52] *Aer.* 12: "I say that Asia differs widely from Europe with regard to the constitutions of all things growing from the earth and to the constitutions of all men." For which, see Calame (1986), 88.

[53] Lateiner (1989), 158, who rightly points out that neither Herodotus nor the author of *Aer.* are, *sensu stricto*, environmental determinists. Pind. *Nem.* 7, 54–5, too sees *physis* as varied, though individually rather than nationally.

stability. Their temperature and seasons are invariable and so their men are domesticated and easily enslaved. In contrast, the volatile climate of the Europeans makes their *physis* more wild, unsocial, spirited, and courageous (23). The emphasis on human bravery in the treatise is particularly interesting and is part of an attempt to rationalize the outcome of the Greco-Persian Wars, in which the vastly superior force of the Persians was defeated by the modest numbers of their Hellenic opponents, a subject that we will turn to in Chapter 5.[54]

It will be instructive to contrast the *Histories* with this conception of the dynamism of human *physis* in relation to culture.[55] Like the Hippocratic treatise, *Airs, Waters, Places*, the *Histories* emphasizes the interrelation of man's constitution and the natural world; however, it is resistant to claims of environmental determinism and to the ethnic plasticity of human *physis* found there. Unlike habit or custom, man's *physis* is constituted by a set of dispositions that are not altered by geography or climate. This fixity of the human becomes an explanatory paradigm in the *Histories*, one that allows Herodotus to reject the more fantastic narratives that he is presented with. One such episode occurs in the context of the race of the one-eyed Arimaspians. This mythical people, perhaps the inspiration for the Cyclops in Homer, were rumored by the Scythians to collect abundant gold in the north of Europe from griffins. Herodotus' skepticism borders on derision, "I do not believe that there are one-eyed men born, having a constitution similar in every other way to other men" (3.116.2: πείθομαι δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ὅκως μουνόφθαλμοι ἄνδρες φύονται, φύσιν ἔχοντες τὴν ἄλλην ὁμοίην τοῖσι ἄλλοισι ἀνθρώποισι).[56] With marked polyptoton, Herodotus rejects the possibility of extreme physiological difference in *physis* because of its departure from the standard of human form.[57] Other men have two eyes, so the *physis* of man is two-eyed. In the *Histories*, the Scythians do not understand that the *physis* of man, like rivers, is predictable. Extravagant suppositions of semi-legendary,

[54] For the opposition between Persians and Greeks as the motivator of the differentiation found in *Aer.*, Backhaus (1976). The concept remains influential: cf. Pl. *Resp* 470c; Isoc. *Paneg.* 157, 184; *Panath.* 163.

[55] See Soph. *Aj.* 548–9, for *physis* as subject to change by *nomoi*; contrast Eur. *Hipp.* 79–81, for *physis* as fixed and untaught.

[56] An implicit correction of his predecessor, Scylax, *FGrH* 709 F 7b. Similarly, Corcella (1984), 76, notes that on account of the law of uniformity in nature Herodotus rejects anomalous distant wandering islands, 2.156.

[57] Though it is impossible to verify, it seems plausible that human *physis* encompasses the breadth of racial difference. At 2.22.3, the Egyptian skin is burned black by heat, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὑπὸ τοῦ καύματος μέλανες ἐόντες. Note that present-day Spartans were originally Egyptians, according to Hdt. 6.55.

unverifiable data are called into question through the association of *physis* with an underlying stability or regularity.

Social praxis in cooperation with the environment can modify an individual's form, but these modifications are not transgenerational. When Herodotus travels to the battlefield of Pelusium in Egypt and views the skulls of the fallen Persian and Egyptian warriors, he finds that the cranium of the Egyptians is much thicker than that of the Persians. The reason for this is not, however, the unique *physis* of the Egyptians or the Persians. As in the example of the Longheads, it is the result of custom: the Egyptians shave their heads from childhood, a process that Herodotus argues thickens their skulls because of their exposure to the sun; the Persians, meanwhile, wear caps and keep themselves in the shade, which keeps their skulls thin (3.12.2–4). There is, however, no suggestion that in the passage of time this practice will lead to a permanent change in each group's *physis*, in contrast with *Airs, Waters, Places*. Human *physis* at birth remains undifferentiated through different cultures. Like the genealogical maps that crisscross east and west in the *Histories*, disturbing the dichotomy of Asia and Europe, *physis* is a unifier.[58]

This is corroborated in Herodotus' excursus on the Greek confusion concerning Heracles' origins, where the narrator corrects the *mythos* of Heracles' sojourn in Egypt.[59] Some Hellenes foolishly believe, he relates, that during Heracles' travels to Egypt he was wreathed and placed in a procession that was meant to end in his being sacrificed to Zeus. According to this fiction, Heracles remained passive until the moment of the sacrifice, at which point he revealed his might and killed the myriad Egyptians present. Here the narrator interjects: "Now in my opinion, the Greeks who tell this story are totally lacking in autopsy of the *physis* of the Egyptians and their customs" (2.45.2: ἐμοὶ μέν νυν δοκέουσι ταῦτα λέγοντες τῆς Αἰγυπτίων φύσιος καὶ τῶν νόμων πάμπαν ἀπείρως ἔχειν οἱ Ἕλληνες). Again, *physis* and *nomos* in Egypt are flagged alongside one another, and the Greeks lack familiarity with both. Their inexperience gestures to a kind of secondary Herodotean autopsy, as it suggests that he has seen and personally investigated enough of human nature and customs in general, and Egyptian ways in particular, to guarantee that such a radical departure in the past is impossible. The Greeks' perception of the Egyptian *physis* as

[58] E.g., Gruen (2011), 37–9.

[59] A. Lloyd (1975), 139, notes this is an attack on a Hecataean *logos*; cf. also Wardman (1960), 404; Munson (2001), 142, on Herodotus' dismantling of the more savage parts of the Greek conceptions of Egypt.

somehow distinctive leads to this false story about the activity of Heracles.[60] Further, it is the lack of awareness of the religious traditions of Egypt that hinders the Greeks from forming a correct account of the episode; the *mythos* as it is told is patently impossible, since it transgresses the *nomoi* of the Egyptians, who have strict mandates against animal sacrifice, and a fortiori, would not permit human sacrifice. Ignorance of each prohibits a correct accounting of events, while at the same time, Herodotus' superior knowledge allows for his correction of the Hellenic version without in fact having witnesses or personal autopsy involved in this rewriting of the distant past.[61]

Reference to the *physis* of the Egyptians might initially be interpreted as indicating a distinctive quality to their constitution. Aeschylus exemplifies this position in his *Suppliants* in the passage noted above. His μορφῆς φύσις should be interpreted as "external appearance," a meaning that potentially also underlies the passage in the *Odyssey*. In the *Histories*, the *physis* of the Egyptians is clarified through Heracles' own humanity: "And since Heracles was still only one, and still a human being, as they themselves say, how does he possess a *physis* to slaughter so many tens of thousands of men?" (2.45.3: ἔτι δὲ ἕνα ἐόντα τὸν Ἡρακλέα καὶ ἔτι ἄνθρωπον, ὡς δὴ φασί, κῶς φύσιν ἔχει πολλὰς μυριάδας φονεῦσαι;) Since he is subject to the limitations of humankind, he could not possibly have wrought the destruction upon the Egyptians that the Greeks incorrectly assert. The Heracles familiar from mythology is quickly dispatched.[62] It is partly this traditional interpretation that keeps the Greeks from recognizing the necessities of human *physis* and the impositions this makes upon the mortal Heracles and upon the Egyptians as well. "Heracles, still a human," could not have killed the myriad Egyptians in any heroically stylized bloodbath: this is beyond the capacities of the human constitution.[63] In the course of deflating the Busiris myth, in which the Egyptian king put to death foreign visitors by sacrificing them, Herodotus attributes to the Greeks the notion of a superhuman *physis* that Heracles could use to defeat his savage enemies. Herodotus rejects the

[60] Cf. Soph. *OC* 337–8, where Oedipus maintains the difference between the Greeks and Egyptians while maligning the lack of support from his sons Eteocles and Polyneices.

[61] Cf. Plato's concern for correcting representations of the divine acting in ways that they did not, e.g., *Resp*. 377e-8a.

[62] Herodotus treats Heracles as a subject of historical inquiry rather than the subject of epic fabrication, with Moyer (2011), 79.

[63] On the danger of transgressing *physis*, DK 68 B 3; DK 87 B 44 F A-B, *passim*; Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou (2006), on the Derveni Papyrus IV 6–9.

possibility of an exceptional *physis*. Universalizing the human constitution works against the argument for Hellenic exceptionalism. Herodotus' additional thesis holds that Greek unfamiliarity with the *physis* of Egyptians led them to believe a mere man, as even they say Heracles was at this period, could defeat myriads. The suppressed premise here is that the parity between Greek and Egyptian *physeis* mandates against a single man being able to surpass multitudes. As the regularity of the winds throws the sun off course into Libya and desiccates the Nile during winter, creating the conditions for the observable decrease of water during this season, so the parameters of human action follow regular courses, ruling out the potential for "heroic" but anomalous action. Heracles is human and so are the Egyptians. Human nature emerges as an atemporal category through which Herodotus is able to correct the interpretation of the events of the past.[64] Even if the Greeks are not aware of the *nomoi* of the Egyptians, knowledge of the human constitution can act as a control on the fantastic embroidery that these sources attempt to pass off as accurate history.[65] In sum, the rejection of the historicity of the one-eyed Arimaspeans as well as the impossibility of Heracles' attack on the Egyptians demonstrates the limits of the human constitution.[66] This stands in marked contrast to those treating *physis* as a historical category subject to radical change in time or place, as in *Airs, Waters, Places*. This is not to say that the author of *Airs, Waters, Places* would accept the *physis* of Heracles as superhuman in the terms that Herodotus rejects; this is a more restricted claim that Herodotus uses *physis* as a stable category that makes it possible to interpret events and groups distant in space and time.

In the above cases, Herodotus underscores the way in which human *physis* functions as a circumscribed set of dispositions. Yet, as noted above, Herodotus also raises the possibility of some interrelation between Egypt's climate and customs. There is a generative ambivalence to this formulation. It opens up the potential for climate and geography to influence

[64] DK 87 B 44 F B col. II 15–20, Antiphon similarly states, F B col. II: σκοπεῖν δ[ὲ] παρέχει τὰ τῶν φύσει [ὄντων] ἀναγκαῖ[α ἐν] πᾶσιν ἀν[θρώ]ποις ("But it is possible to consider what is necessary by nature in what exists for all men").

[65] Eratosthenes too rejects the narrative, see Strabo 17.1.19. The limits of human nature take on significance in contemporary ethics. In the text known as the *Anonymous Iamblichi*, the author argues at DK 89 B 6 against pursuing a life devoted to desiring more by arguing that even if a superhuman (ὑπερφυής) were to emerge, human nature's incapacity for surviving alone and its inevitable movement toward forming alliances would lead to the destruction of such an individual.

[66] See the new Heraclitus fragment, Kouremenos, Parássoglou, and Tsantsanoglou (2006), iv.6–9: "the sun's *physis* cannot exceed its own spatial limit, without punishment from the Erinyes, attendants of Justice."

culture. It does not suggest that these alter man's *physis*. However, an ethnocentric nature is raised explicitly within the *Histories*. After the fall of Sardis, its former ruler, Croesus, advises Cyrus against the destruction of the city. In his effort to persuade Cyrus to stop sacking it, he warns that "the Persians are poor being unruly by nature" (1.89.2: Πέρσαι φύσιν ἐόντες ὑβρισταὶ εἰσὶ ἀχρήματοι) and that whoever takes the greatest wealth from the plunder will be the first to revolt against him. Like Herodotus, Croesus uses *physis* for its predictive potential. Yet, it takes on a dispositional quality that is specific to the Persian *ethnos*, a usage that we have seen was prominent in *Airs, Waters, Places* and the distinctions made between European and Asian peoples.[67] A *hybristes* is associated with overconfidence, unruliness, and an over-valuation of the self, all qualities that would presumably be exacerbated by unexpected prosperity and lead to the attempt to topple Cyrus' rule. Croesus' claim that Persians have a distinctive (and undesirable) *physis* due to their privation is clearly persuasive, as it has its intended effect when Cyrus stops the ruin of the city. Yet the narrative does not let Croesus' words go unchallenged. After the Lydian Pactyas is entrusted by Cyrus with the wealth of Sardis, he quickly rebels against the Great King, much to Cyrus' chagrin. Croesus' warning finds fulfillment in the case of Pactyas but not in ethnic terms. Pactyas is, after all, a Lydian (1.153.3). Apparently, the deleterious effect of sudden wealth on one's subjects transcends ethnicity. The *Histories* undermines the association of Persia with an ethnically motivated hybris, even as it registers the presence of this kind of thinking.

One further passage may be thought to provide evidence for environmental determinism. It comes at the close of the *Histories*, in an episode that returns to the rule of the great Persian emancipator, Cyrus. We are told that once the Great King had entertained a suggestion by one of his men, the Persian Artembares, who proposed transferring the population of Persia to a more fruitful land. Herodotus records that Cyrus responded as follows:

> ὡς οὐκέτι ἄρξοντας ἀλλ' ἀρξομένους· φιλέειν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν μαλακῶν χώρων μαλακοὺς γίνεσθαι· οὐ γὰρ τι τῆς αὐτῆς γῆς εἶναι καρπόν τε θωμαστὸν φύειν καὶ ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς τὰ πολέμια. (9.122.3)
>
> [He said that] they would no longer rule but be ruled, since usually soft men come from soft lands: for the same land cannot grow marvellous fruit and men noble in the affairs of war.

[67] This is common, however, in Thucydides, 1.121.4, 3.64.4, 6.79.2, 7.14.2, 7.14.4, 7.48.4.

The narrator expands on this with the sentence that completes the work: "defeated in their judgment by Cyrus, they chose to rule while inhabiting a poor land rather than to be slaves to others and sow plains" (9.122.4: ἐσσωθέντες τῇ γνώμῃ πρὸς Κύρου, ἄρχειν τε εἵλοντο λυπρὴν οἰκέοντες μᾶλλον ἢ πεδιάδα σπείροντες ἄλλοισι δουλεύειν). This closural moment has often been interpreted as a veiled *Luxuskritik*, providing a contrast between the now-enervated Persians and their "hard" forebears. It would thus be a nostalgic return to their former status as fearsome warriors.[68] On this model, as we saw above in the discussion of the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*, Persian men are like plants, as they too are nurtured by the earth, climate, and water. Cyrus' closural ecology certainly merits explanation and potentially aligns the *Histories* with the tradition in *Airs, Waters, Places*, with its implicit critique of contemporary Persia. Above all, it raises the question of whether men's dispositions on the battlefield are shaped by their environment.

A complicating feature for the argument in favor of environmental determinism is the fact that Herodotus immediately shifts away from geography or climate to cultural factors: if the Persians were to depart for a fertile land they would become an agricultural people by "sowing the plains" (πεδιάδα σπείροντες), which is evidently viewed as an obstacle to their military aspirations. This suggests that the reciprocity between physical environment and the human is not direct but mediated by social praxis. Cyrus' language of "soft lands" is a reference to the way geography shapes human cultural practices, not human *physis*, at least not directly. In line with this interpretation and the imagery of Persians sowing plains in this closural moment, it is preferable to interpret Cyrus' reference to men's excellence in war as the growth of a crop (φύειν) as a figure of speech. If Cyrus' dictum is not a literal reference to the man-as-plant argument, but a means of introducing the consequence of cultural practice – in this case, farming – on the Persians, this undermines the argument that the passage represents a straightforward case for environment shaping man's disposition in war. In fact, Cyrus raises a more complex problem, on the extent to which cultural practices that

[68] See Rood and Kingsley (forthcoming). According to Thomas (2000), 217: "There are elements of such thinking [environmental determinism], most prominently in the final paragraph (9.122)." Redfield (1985), 114, "This bit of Persian wisdom is in fact an ironic criticism of the Persians: if the Persians had been true to this judgment, the Great Persian War would not have happened; if Cyrus himself had been true to it, he would not have attacked Babylon and then the Massagetae." The *topos* of impoverishment is evident in Demaratus' speech as well, 7.102.1, τῇ Ἑλλάδι πενίη μὲν αἰεί κοτε σύντροφός ἐστι ("poverty has always been a foster-sister of Hellas").

are at least in part dependent on environmental conditions determine military excellence.[69]

Cultivation of the earth is linked to the hypothetical enslavement of the Persians, which contrasts sharply with *Airs, Waters, Places*, where the earth gives of its produce due to the paradisiacal state of nature and the inhabitants make use of it in an effortless life of enervating ease (*Aer.* 12). On the Hippocratic author's reading, the *physis*-derived cause of the cowardice of the Asiatics is due to the invariability of the seasons, which leads to the body's lack of excitement (*Aer.* 16).[70] Alternatively, in Herodotus it is the physical activity of farming that creates a state of sufficiency that the Persians have been famed for lacking since their introduction in the *Histories*. In Book 1, the Lydian Sandanis warned Croesus of Persia's dearth: "They eat not what they want but what they have, since their land is harsh" (1.71.2: σιτέονται δὲ οὐκ ὅσα ἐθέλουσι ἀλλ' ὅσα ἔχουσι, χώρην ἔχοντες τρηχέαν). Cyrus' words raise the issue of the extent to which the poor environment of Persis is responsible for the valor of the Persians. Readers of the *Histories* are equipped to answer this in the negative. The Persians had inhabited Persis long before the rule of Cyrus and remained a subject people during all that time. Environment is neither a catalyst nor a precondition for military prowess.

It has been suggested that this scene jars with an earlier one found in the first book, in which Cyrus, intent on persuading the Persians to support his claim to the Median throne, has the Persians gather on two successive days to gain their assent to his coup.[71] On the first day, Cyrus brought the people to an uncultivated area and had them reclaim it for farming (1.126.1: ἐξημερῶσαι); on the second, he entertained the Persians with a lavish feast. On Vivienne Gray's reading of 9.122, "the epilogue contradicts the earlier story in which Cyrus puts a choice in front of his Persians – to work the land all their lives or feast in luxury (1.126). He uses their preference for the soft life there to motivate them to rise against the Medes and set out on the path to empire."[72] However, this interpretation neglects a key detail for interpreting these two passages – in the preamble to the revolt, Cyrus brings the Persians to feast as an *army*.[73] Recall that Cyrus

[69] Cf. 2.164.1, for the case of Egypt and its distinct warrior class. At 2.168.1, this class is also associated with agriculturalism, which undermines Cyrus' contention. See Rood and Kingsley (forthcoming) for additional discussion.

[70] As noted above, this was compounded by their *nomoi* and monarchy in particular.

[71] Most recently, Xian (2020), 19–22.

[72] Gray (2002), 314.

[73] He stage-manages the revolt by first calling his men to an "assembly" (1.125.2: ἁλίην; 1.125.3: συνάλισε).

first contrives to present himself as a general ordering his troops to be present, ἔφη Ἀστυάγεά μιν στρατηγὸν Περσέων ἀποδεικνύναι (1.125.2). Herodotus then recounts the tribes of the Persians, as though giving a war catalog. Cyrus compels the Persians to practice cultivating the earth, a day of hard labor that they describe later as "full of evils"; on the second day, Cyrus sacrifices and prepares a feast for the men to receive the Persian army (1.126.2: ὡς δεξόμενος <τούτοισι> τὸν Περσέων στρατόν). Why is this assembly of Persians referred to proleptically in this way? Significantly, it is only at this moment that he lays bare his intention to lead them in war against the Medians – a war that would free the Persians. Note here that agricultural activity is considered "servile" (1.126.5: πόνον δουλοπρεπέα), while its opposite, war, is coded to freedom (1.126.6: νῦν ὦν ἐμέο πειθόμενοι γίνεσθε ἐλεύθεροι, "now be obedient to me and become free"). In this passage and at 9.122, Cyrus opposes agricultural activity to war and treats them as entailing, respectively, slavery and freedom. It is paradoxically the absence of cultivation that necessitates Persia's success in its imperialist project. All this is rather removed from consideration of strict environmental determinism that we saw above in *Airs, Waters, Places*. To summarize, Cyrus' description of the relationship of Persian men to Persian soil is a metaphorical representation of the opposition of cultivation to imperialism, not a literal espousal of environmental determinism. There is no evidence that natural landscape shapes man's valor.[74]

In the *Histories*, *physis* encompasses the set of possible dispositions and physical attributes of its object. There are also metaphysical limits. In a final moment of mental clarity, the Persian despot Cambyses notes the bounds set on man's nature.[75] Following the revelation that the Persian Empire has been taken by surprise by the False Smerdis, Cambyses recounts his secret murder of his brother, the true Smerdis, and asks his courtiers to take revenge on his behalf against this imposter:

> In Egypt, I saw a vision while asleep – if only I hadn't! I supposed that a messenger came from the house to announce that Smerdis was sitting on the royal throne and that he touched heaven with his head. Afraid that I would be deprived of my rule by my brother I did what was more hasty than wise. For it is not in the constitution of man to turn aside the future

[74] Chiasson (2001), 62–4, also rejects environmental determinism, although on different grounds. For a compatible refutation of corrupting wealth in the overthrow of the Medes and at the end of the *Histories*, see Gorman and Gorman (2014), 81–6.

[75] For more on Cambyses in the *Histories*, see pp. 48–71.

(ἐν τῇ γὰρ ἀνθρωπηίῃ φύσι οὐκ ἐνῆν[76] ἄρα τὸ μέλλον γίνεσθαι ἀποτρέπειν). Fool that I was, I sent Prexaspes to Susa to kill Smerdis. (3.65.2–3)

Like Croesus on the pyre, the near-to-death Cambyses is granted a moment of mental clarity in which he correctly assesses the injury he has imposed upon himself by not understanding the limits of the human.[77] He perceives that his attempt to prevent the dream's message from occurring has been misguided in the extreme and that the violence against his natal family was unmotivated and detrimental to his interests. It was the secretive murder of Smerdis that created the possibility for the Median imposter to emerge and take over the throne. The limits of man are thus not only physical. Cambyses' recognition of this demonstrates man's inability to steer his destiny – a leitmotif from the proem. Recall that while Croesus was able to get an extension on his deposition, he too ultimately could not turn his fate aside (1.91.1). The theme is prominent elsewhere: following Xerxes' war council and his opposition to waging war against Greece, Artabanus is threatened in a dream for trying to turn aside what must be, "neither in the future nor in the present will you get away scot-free with turning aside what is fated to happen" (7.17.2).[78] Human *physis* is finite.[79] This account levels the playing field in terms of self-determination – all may not have an equal chance at success, but all are constricted by the same rules. Cambyses' statement echoes popular wisdom, but its framing in the domain of *physis* places it in a wider context of inquiry into the human taking place in the fifth century. In this way, Herodotus expands the parameters of *physis* to include human limits in altering their own destinies, a usage with ethical implications that go far beyond issues of natural science.

This raises a further question, on whether the divine operates through the expression of *physis*. At least some sophistic treatises seem to have supported this. The author of the Hippocratic *On Regimen*, for example,

[76] I take this imperfect to be an instance of the "imperfect of a truth just realized," for which see Smyth s.v. 2795.

[77] Knowledge of *physis* is in Heraclitus a vital component of correct action, cf. DK 22 B 112: σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μεγίστη, καὶ σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαΐοντας. ("Sound thinking is the greatest virtue and wisdom, to speak the truth and to act according to *physis*, by understanding.") For cogent argument on the authenticity of this fragment, see Kahn (1979), 119–23.

[78] An anonymous Persian prior to the battle at Plataea echoes the sentiment, 9.16.4. On what "must be", see Gould (1989), 73–8; Harrison (2000), 226ff; Mikalson (2003), 148–50.

[79] For the limits of human *physis*, see Th. 2.50.1; Pl. *Leg.* 713c. According to Antiphon, life *and* death are both aspects of *physis*, DK 87 B 44 F A col. III 25–8; similarly, DK 82 B 11a.

declares that while men are responsible for the establishment of custom, the gods have ordered the *physis* of all.[80] Herodotus reveals a rather different conceptualization of the divine and *physis* in his discussion of the "forethought" (προνοίη) of the divine (3.108–9). Herodotus judges that divine providence deliberately keeps the reproductive systems of prey fecund and restricts that of harmful predators. Such forethought maintains the diversity of animal species. A counterfactual proves the point: if vipers and winged snakes came into being "as their *physis* already is" (3.109.1: ὡς ἡ φύσις αὐτοῖσι ὑπάρχει) then mankind would go extinct.[81] He goes on to explain that the male serpent is murdered by the female in the act of mating. Meanwhile, she meets an appropriately grisly fate at the hands of her offspring, who eat through her womb (3.109.2). This is an example of the way in which Herodotus' view of nature treats it as a system of interdependence. In this case, interdependence is explicitly related to man's place in the world, since snake proliferation would endanger *human* existence (3.109.1: "life would not be liveable for humans"). The echoes of Protagoras – or at least Plato's Protagoras – in this argument on divine providence have been ably remarked upon already and require no repeating here.[82] But the implications to be drawn from the reference to *physis* remain unclear.

Since the divine works to negate the existing constitution of these pests, it is difficult to interpret *physis* itself as divine. This is itself a contrast with *On Regimen*, where the gods arranged the constitutions of all things. For Herodotus, animal *physis* is counteracted by the divine to bring about a kind of balance. Interestingly, this also cuts against the grain of Plato's *Protagoras*. In Protagoras' Great Speech, he famously has Epimetheus distribute faculties for the survival of animals and humans. In the process, he is described as "granting a *physis*" (*Prt.* 320e: διδοὺς φύσιν) to these species. Herodotus innovates by projecting the mythological narrative of mariticide and matricide onto the natural world and by treating it as an example of divine providence. This continues the correspondence between the nonhuman and the human spheres. Herodotus' ecological paradigm inscribes excess onto nature but curbs it through the agency of the gods.

Conclusion

The study of *physis* as an object of scientific interest matured through the investigations of Presocratic philosophers on the observable world. Despite

[80] *Vict.* 1.11 Littré. [81] For discussion of the passage, see Demont (2022).
[82] See Thomas (2000), 141–50, with reference to Hippocratic treatises and Democritus as well.

the loss of much of this material, hints of its primacy persist in their fragmentary remains. Herodotus' contemporary, Antiphon, claims that

> Since at least by nature (φύσει) we all are fitted similarly by nature (πεφύκ[α]μεν) to be Greeks and non-Greeks. But it is possible to consider what is necessary by nature in what exists (τὰ τῶν φύσει [ὄντων] ἀναγκαί [ων]) for all men . . . and in these things none of us has been defined non-Greek or Greek. For we all breathe in air through our mouths and noses. (DK 87 B 44 F B col. II 10–33)[83]

The underlying unity of mankind is supported by reference to the shared activity of breathing. Although Antiphon's fragment is frustratingly lacunose, even in this state it appears to communicate the same notion that is found in the *Histories*. The human constitution is universal, embracing Greeks and non-Greeks explicitly. It should inspire mutual respect and understanding on the basis of equality. This last feature of *physis* is largely implicit in the *Histories* but runs through Herodotus' deflation of cases of apparent exceptionalism including the Arimaspeans, Egyptians, Heracles, and the Great King.

As we have seen, the *Odyssey* had a single, uncertain use of *physis*. By contrast, Herodotus is in dialogue with those expanding its domain into the spheres of natural science and the human. *Physis* embraces the interior and exterior regularities of subjects as diverse as landmasses, rivers, seas, elements, animals, and men. Unlike *nomos*, which separates human populations into discrete groups within an ordered system, *physis* highlights the structural elements shared by mankind. Specific to Herodotus is the use of *physis* as a category of historical explanation; it is a standard of measurement that permits historical inference. This standard depends on the dispositions that constitute man's *physis*. Environmental factors shape human culture, but it is less clear how they impact man's constitution. In any case, Herodotus appears to challenge theories of environmental determinism current at the time of the composition of the *Histories*.

[83] There is additional evidence for the unity of human nature in Plato. His *Protagoras* uses the sophist Hippias as a mouthpiece for a point that can be interpreted this way: "Men I consider you all kin and relatives and fellow-citizens by *physis* and not *nomos* (φύσει, οὐ νόμῳ). For like is akin to like by *physis* (τὸ γὰρ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φύσει συγγενές ἐστιν). But *nomos* being *tyrannos* of all men compels things contrary to *physis* (πολλὰ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν βιάζεται)" (DK 86 C 1 = Pl. *Prt.* 337c7-d3). It remains unclear whether this refers to the human race or the Greek race, Guthrie (1969), 162; however, Guthrie adds, 163, that it is suggestive that Hippias includes foreigners in the list of authors he anthologizes in the *Synagoge*. For a more detailed discussion of the *nomos-physis* debate and Hippias, see Johann (1973); Patzer (1986).

Placing the *Histories* alongside its extant successor in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* exposes some of the distinctiveness of Herodotus' conception of *physis*. While the Halicarnassian is willing to explore the alligator's *physis* in Egypt or the bizarre regularity of the Nile's flooding out of season, for Thucydides, nature is most often *human* nature. In the *History*, individuals associate the constitution of man with desire, with domination (1.76, 5.105), and with ethnic individualism (1.121, 7.14). It cannot be stopped by justice, *nomos*, or fear (3.45, 3.84). It might lie hidden, but its truth eventually shines forth (3.64). In these respects, Thucydides' treatment of the nature of man is striking for its departure from what is found in the *Histories*. However, in his famed description of the stasis at Corcyra, Thucydides relies on *physis* as a category of historical explanation in much the same way as his predecessor. Revolution, he narrates, brought about great horrors to those poleis in which they occurred, "as happen and always will be as long as human nature is the same" (3.82.2: γιγνόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα, ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ).[84] This bleak judgment relies on the underlying unity of the nature of man, which corresponds closely to Herodotus' own position. For both, this allows for *physis* to become a category of historical explanation. Chapter 5 develops this focus on the human by looking to the role of man's constitution on the battlefield and the rhetoric of surpassing the limits of *physis*.

[84] Cf. his use of τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, 1.22.4.

CHAPTER 5

Physis *on the Battlefield*

The *Histories*' incorporation of *physis* as a universal measure of the capacities of man has so far suggested a set of limits on human traits and actions. This emphasis plays out rather differently as the narrative moves forward into the Greco-Persian Wars. The startling Hellenic victory over the Persians left behind a politically charged causal lacuna. In the course of the fifth century, competing ideological narratives were drafted in order to justify the successful outcome of the loosely coordinated Greek defensive alliance against the vastly superior Persian force.[1] This under-determined outcome shaped and drove a debate on human nature on the battlefield.[2] In the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*, for example, the European *physis* was viewed as made of sterner stuff than any eastern counterparts. In this text, *physis* offers an opportunity to naturalize the Greek victory as the inevitable outcome of innate European superiority. Like *Airs*, the *Histories* draws on *physis* as a conceptual category for thinking about martial valor. Various historical actors in the *Histories* appeal to *physis* as a causal paradigm explaining victory. However, the *Histories* has generally been read as espousing the cause of *nomos* – "custom," "law," "convention" – as the proximate, though not exclusive, cause of Greek success.[3] This conclusion often pits Greek *nomos* against Persian *physis*.[4] This chapter will challenge the opposition of *nomos* and *physis* that is so familiar from contemporary sophistic discourse. Rather than opposing human nature to law or custom, the *Histories* explores a rhetoric of transhumanism, or the

[1] Divine causal explanation is hammered home, for example, in Aesch. *Pers.* 344–7; 353–4; 454–5; 472–3; 532–5; 724–5; 739–40; 906–8; 942–3; 1005–7.

[2] Heinimann (1945), 33; Lateiner (1984), 271, 273–4; (1989), 184; Redfield (1985), 115–16.

[3] E.g., Humphreys (1987), 212; Lateiner (1989), 146; Thomas (2000), 68, for the Scythian *nomoi* as the cause of their success; 109, for Greek *nomoi* as the motivating factor behind Greek success.

[4] Heinimann (1945), argued that both *Airs, Waters, Places* and the *Histories* display a similar treatment with regard to *nomos* and *physis* that predates their opposition in later authors such as Antiphon and Hippias. The *locus classicus* of this occurs in the context of Thucydides' Melian Dialogue, 5.105. See pp. 84–5.

enhancement of nature. However, we shall see that Herodotus represents a counter-discourse to a superior *physis*, and nature's enhancement is ultimately displaced as a causal paradigm for victory on the battlefield.

Surpassing *physis*

What is distinctive to the *Histories* as the narrative turns toward the Greco-Persian Wars is the emphasis it places on transcending or enhancing one's *physis*. This motif focuses on the limitations that *physis* imposes on the human, but only via surpassing them, in a kind of impermanent transhumanism.[5] This human enhancement is entangled with environment, warfare, and victory. The potential to transcend nature is first evident prior to the Persian invasion of Greece, during the Ionian revolt. There, Herodotus explicitly endorses the strategy of going beyond human *physis* in the context of the Carian rebellion against Persia. The Carians' loose confederation of cities and villages allied itself to the rather desperate Ionian forces. After discovering their defection, the Persian general Daurises marched on Caria, leaving conquered poleis along the Hellespont in his wake. Herodotus delays his narrative of the Persian invasion with an assembly of Carian nobles who deliberate their course of action at the White Pillars on the river Marsyas:

> After the Carians gathered there, many different views were expressed, of which the best seems to me to have been that of Pixodarus . . .. This man's opinion was that the Carians should cross the Maeander and join the battle having the river at their back, so that they would be unable to flee and be compelled to stay on the spot and become still better than their *physis* (ἵνα μὴ ἔχοντες ὀπίσω φεύγειν οἱ Κᾶρες αὐτοῦ τε μένειν ἀναγκαζόμενοι γενοίατο ἔτι ἀμείνονες τῆς φύσιος). (5.118.2)

According to How and Wells, Herodotus "as usual, shows complete ignorance of tactics; he really thinks that an army should fight where no retreat is possible."[6] Yet the strategy, explicitly approved as it is by the narrator and the only one given exposure, provides a view to the counterfactual logic of military tactics in the *Histories*. To unpack the narrator's position: the Maeander can act as a mechanism to transcend *physis* by

[5] Herodotus' language of transcending *physis* aligns nicely with the "father" of transhumanism, Julian Huxley, who coined the term in his 1957 book, *New Bottles for New Wine*. He refers to it as, 17, "man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature."

[6] How-Wells 5.118.

compelling those standing with their backs to it to take either absolute victory or suffer total annihilation.[7] The zero-sum scheme enforces conditions for humans to go beyond themselves, and the participle ἀναγκαζόμενοι (*anankazomenoi*) points to the loss of agency that this requires – the enhancement of *physis* overcomes the rational human subject.[8] In the end, the Carians decide against Pixodarus' strategy and instead place the Persians against the river to keep them from fleeing in the event of a Carian victory.

A parallel configuration occurs in the nonhuman world in the context of the description of the Danube. The superlative nature of the Danube, "greatest of all rivers," excepting perhaps the Nile, leads into a description of its current. Unlike other rivers, its stream remains equal in both winter and summer: "during the winter it is as big as it is, and even slightly greater than its *physis*," and this is the result, Herodotus hazards, of the amount of snow that falls in winter in Scythia (4.50.2–3). The summer flow of the river remains steady due to the heavy rains that feed tributary streams and the increased evaporation from the sun, a combination that produces the same current in summer as well as winter. Waters enlarged by rivulets of winter snow outstrip the current of the Danube and make it slightly "greater than its nature."

Like the river, the nature of man can be temporarily enhanced. In this case, it is in light of the compulsion effected by another river, the Maeander. In the final analysis, it is the Persians who are given the advantage of compulsion, as they are positioned against the stream, on the grounds that this would prevent their retreat. It is a strategy that ends in the rout of the Carians – though they fought well, we are

[7] Lattimore (1939), 27, for Pixodarus as a "practical advisor." Surprisingly, the passage is not discussed in the recent treatment of Book 5, Irwin and Greenwood (2007). For crossing rivers and transgression of boundaries more generally, see Lateiner (1985), 88–93; Clark (2018), 93–114; Bosak-Schroeder (2020), chapter 2. The passage evokes another strategic puzzle on the river as a site of strategic manipulation: at 1.206.2–3, Tomyris offers Cyrus the choice of marching three days inland either on the side of the Araxes river marking the district of the Massagetes or on the side delimiting Persia's territory. In this case, the inland march negates the influence of the river itself, but the choice leads Croesus, as wise advisor, to enumerate the risks of Persia facing the Araxes. In the event of a defeat, he perceives that the Massagetes will hardly stop from pressing their advantage and utterly destroying the *entire* empire (1.207.3: πᾶσαν τὴν ἀρχήν) of Persia. In the event of a victory, the river at their backs will offer a clear path to the extension of empire. This zero-sum position of conquer or be conquered resonates with Pixodarus' attempt to weaponize the river to bolster the Carian chances of victory.

[8] One can also be worse than one's *physis*, see 7.16.α1, where Artabanus reworks a fragment from Herodotus' other wise advisor, the historical Solon, F 12 West, and relates the winds' disturbance of the *physis* of the sea to the effects on the King from those who advise him poorly; and Otanes, 3.80.4, suggests that monarchy by nature makes the tyrant hostile to his subjects.

informed – because of the multitude arrayed against them (5.119.1: τέλος δὲ ἐσσώθησαν διὰ πλῆθος). As is evident from this passage, transcending *physis* is bound up in compulsion and success in warfare. It theoretically encourages a kind of bravery that might render possible the defeat of superior numerical forces.[9] The notion here of the potential boundary of the human that might be transgressed in battle is reprised, significantly, in Xerxes' famous interlude with the exiled Spartan king, Demaratus, on the Spartans, numerical superiority, and victory in battle.[10]

The passage has been much discussed. It is generally interpreted as one of the key causal moments explaining Greek success against the Persians.[11] As we shall see, this set-piece on human nature, fear, compulsion, and bravery places the dialogue in a constellation of ideas that jointly combine to have great explanatory power. After a lengthy catalog of the land forces Xerxes has at his disposal and a general review of his navy, the Persian despot returns to the beach and questions Demaratus.[12] He is particularly interested in the prospect of a lack of opposition to his forces, given their superior number. His question is not an idle one but in fact bears on the later narrative: the Thracians would plead with the Hellenes to guard the pass at Olympus and threaten to medize if military aid were not forthcoming, concluding, "for necessity is never by nature stronger than inability" (7.172.3: οὐδαμὰ γὰρ ἀδυνασίης ἀνάγκη κρέσσων ἔφυ). And during the Greco-Persian Wars, the Greeks, including the Spartans, are often portrayed as on the point of flight – before Artemisium (8.4.1), Salamis (8.74.2), and Plataea (9.51). Xerxes' inquiry prompts Demaratus to reflect on the nature of Hellenic courage.

> τῇ Ἑλλάδι πενίη μὲν αἰεί κοτε σύντροφός ἐστι, ἀρετὴ δὲ ἐπακτός ἐστι, ἀπό τε σοφίης κατεργασμένη καὶ νόμου ἰσχυροῦ· τῇ διαχρεωμένη ἡ Ἑλλὰς τήν τε πενίην ἀπαμύνεται καὶ τὴν δεσποσύνην. (7.102.1)

[9] There are not many treatments specifically devoted to bravery in the *Histories*: Harrell (2003), is a first, though her focus is upon gendering bravery; more generally, see Balot (2014), 81–108. Cf. the Roman destruction of the bridge at Polyb. 2.32.10–11: ἅμα δὲ μίαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολείποντες ἐλπίδα τῆς σωτηρίας τὴν ἐν τῷ νικᾶν, διὰ τὸ κατόπιν αὐτοῖς ἄβατον ὄντα παρακεῖσθαι τὸν προειρημένον ποταμόν. ("At the same time, they were leaving themselves with one hope of salvation, namely, victory, since the river mentioned earlier that lay behind them was impassable.")

[10] For Demaratus in the *Histories*, Boedeker (1987), remains essential.

[11] E.g. Gigante (1956), 144ff; Ostwald (1969), 31; Waters (1971), 97; Hartog (1988), 334; Lateiner (1989), 155. For the structure, see Scardino (2007), 200–1.

[12] The way Demaratus is introduced marks the passage out as significant: Macan ad 7.101 notes the formality of Demaratus' patronymic here, despite the fact that he has already played a role in the narrative.

> Poverty has always been a foster-sister of Hellas, but virtue is imported, attained by wisdom and powerful *nomos*; making use of it, Hellas defends itself against both poverty and despotism.

In these famous lines, Demaratus forecasts the Hellenic success in the Greco-Persian Wars by expounding on their "acquired valour" and resistance to despotism.[13] He assigns greatest import not to a superior *physis* but to wisdom and *nomos*.[14] By valor Hellas keeps its land fertile and free from an externally imposed tyranny.

Demaratus continues his disquisition by turning specifically to Lacedaemonian bravery by explaining to Xerxes that the Spartiates would not come to terms but oppose him with their numbers – whatever numbers those might be, a thousand, or more, or less: ἤν τε ἐλάσσονες τούτων, ἤν τε καὶ πλεῦνες (7.102.3). Xerxes rejects this as an idealized, exaggerated portrait of the Spartans. The idea that a thousand men, or five times that, would take the field against the myriad Persians and their subjects beggared belief.[15] As David Konstan has observed, the Persians generally, and Xerxes in particular, display a fascination with the "reification of value."[16] This passion for quantification and its association with the surveyor's gaze equate size with power. In this way, Xerxes' response mirrors Herodotus' on the *physis* of Heracles in the second book, where the narrator used human *physis* as a corrective to the fantastic myths of the Greeks. Correspondingly, Xerxes opposes the extravagant vaunting of bravery as beyond the Spartans' nature. And in a rejoinder to Demaratus' jab at despotism, he identifies political freedom as a hindrance to success:

[13] Flower-Marincola 9.48.1, "In H. the question of who is best/bravest at war is almost a leitmotif of Books 5–9." Cf. especially Balot (2014), 84–91. Demaratus' claim on Spartan valor expands the usual wrangling of the excellence of a given warrior into an ethnic, rather than individual, question.

[14] Raaflaub (2004), 234, on this as a particularly Spartan notion of freedom.

[15] Numerical superiority can be an ingredient in success in concert either with a monarchy or a democracy: see Hdt. 5.3.1, on the Thracians, who are the "greatest nation in the world," and "if ruled by one man or if they were to make common cause" (εἰ δὲ ὑπ' ἑνὸς ἄρχοιτο ἢ φρονέοι κατὰ τὠυτό), would be irresistible. Alternatively, it represents extremes that are liable to be cut back by the divine, 7.10.ε. Cf. Th. 1.121, where the Corinthians assure the allies they will be victorious over Athens because of (1) their numerical superiority, (2) experience in war, and (3) unity in taking orders: τῇ γε εὐψυχίᾳ δήπου περιεσόμεθα. ὃ γὰρ ἡμεῖς ἔχομεν φύσει ἀγαθόν, ἐκείνοις οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο διδαχῇ: ὃ δ' ἐκεῖνοι ἐπιστήμῃ προύχουσι, καθαιρετὸν ἡμῖν ἐστὶ μελέτῃ. ("We will surely excel in courage. For that which we have is noble by *physis*, nor can it be acquired by them by instruction: what those are superior in by expertise, this can be achieved by us in practice.")

[16] Konstan (1987), 62. Cf. Christ (1994), on Xerxes' investigations. For Herodotus' agonistic use of calculations, see Sergueenkova (2016). Persians also get interested in numbers at, e.g., 1.136.1 (sons); 1.153.1 (Spartan strength).

> ὑπὸ μὲν γὰρ ἑνὸς ἀρχόμενοι κατὰ τρόπον τὸν ἡμέτερον γενοίατ' ἂν δειμαίνοντες τοῦτον καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἑωυτῶν φύσιν ἀμείνονες, καὶ ἴοιεν ἀναγκαζόμενοι μάστιγι ἐς πλεῦνας ἐλάσσονες ἐόντες· ἀνειμένοι δὲ ἐς τὸ ἐλεύθερον οὐκ ἂν ποιέοιεν τούτων οὐδέτερα. (7.103.4)
>
> For if they were ruled by one man as in our way, fearing this man they would become better than their own nature and would advance by compulsion of the whip into greater numbers, although fewer in number themselves. Given over to freedom they would do neither of these things.

Demaratus' estimation is impossible because of the limits of human nature. Nature follows reasoned mathematical probabilities in warfare and selects for survival. Xerxes identifies a potential exception to this principle in one-man rule, which can compel men to overcome their *physis*.[17] Xerxes sees the monarch as a kind of human engineer who exerts a mastery over nature. But he does so by dehumanizing his subjects. The passive participle – again we see ἀναγκαζόμενοι – along with the detail of the presence of the whip and the prominence of fear that overcomes *physis* explores discursive transhumanism but does so by equating man with the nonhuman, with the animal. The involuntary nature of this phenomenon is again driven home in the final sentence – freedom eliminates the potential for this species of transhumanism. Xerxes' words are remarkably in line with the strategy of Pixodarus on men overcoming their *physis* through their compulsion to stay and fight or drown (5.118.2) – a strategy endorsed by Herodotus.

What precisely is at stake in this passage? Rosalind Thomas has argued that the *nomos-physis* opposition so common in the intellectual circles of the fifth-century sophists is evident here in the Demaratus-Xerxes debate and that "Persian natural instincts, or nature, are counteracted by fear, Spartan nature by *nomos*."[18] In line with her wider thesis, Thomas finds that *nomos* outmaneuvers its antithesis, in this case, *physis*. Let us consider

[17] Herodotus primes the audience for the importance of a single leader in battle during the Ionian revolt by portraying the effectiveness of the Phocaian commander, Dionysius, 6.11–12, and the damage done by not heeding him.

[18] Thomas (2000), 110, notes that the debate at 7.101–9 is partly couched in terms of *nomos* and *physis* but nuances this by stating that these are relative characteristics rather than absolute and so do not commit the narrator to inborn Greek preeminence, *pace* Lateiner (1989), 160. She considers this a tangential opposition and sees the true debate as taking place between *nomos* and environment (125). I would add that *physis* can be conceived of as an "underlying reality" in particular at 7.16.α1, though see also 2.19.1. However, living without *nomos*, as the Androphagoi do, 4.106, in a state of nature is not portrayed as more "real" than living with it. Cf. Lebow (2001), on Thucydides and the civilizing function of *nomoi*.

this hypothesis by looking to another meditation on excellence in war in relation to *physis* and *nomos*, one that suggests that Xerxes was not making an idle observation in the context of fifth-century intellectual culture.

Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* attempts to justify the dubious actions of his subject by charting the force of several potential motivations. While justifying the power of erotic feeling to override reason, Gorgias sketches a theory of sight and aesthetics that is relevant to this discussion.[19]

> For the things we see do not have the nature that we want [them to have], but the nature that each one has happened to have (ἃ γὰρ ὁρῶμεν, ἔχει φύσιν οὐχ ἣν ἡμεῖς θέλομεν, ἀλλ' ἣν ἕκαστον ἔτυχε). And through sight the soul is formed even in its habits. For as soon as hostile bodies arm themselves against opponents with hostile equipment made of bronze and iron, the former for defence, the latter for attack, if sight sees them, it gets upset and it upsets the soul, so that they often flee stupefied, as if the imminent danger were already there. For strong though it is, the habit of *nomos* is driven away by the fear of sight, which upon arrival makes one neglect both what is judged fine by *nomos* and whatever nobility comes about through victory. And immediately upon seeing fearful things they depart from their present confidence in the present circumstances. (DK 82 B 11.15–17)

On Gorgias' analysis, the power of sight is such that the *physis* of objects attacks the passive viewer – illustrated here appropriately by the analogy of a group of hoplites standing opposite one another in battle formation. The *physis* of the enemy as revealed by their psychic image overrides acculturated behaviors and ethical norms.[20] In this case, it results in the disturbance of the closely held directive (*nomos*) of displaying courage and valor and remaining in battle. Aesthetic response has the terrifying potential to drive out rational and non-emotional behavior and to manifest itself in action – retreat – on the battlefield.

For Gorgias, or at least for his Helen, *physis* overpowers *nomos*. Xerxes offers an account that differs from this in important respects. He implicitly challenges Demaratus on Greek *nomos* with his own reference to Persia's *tropos*, "custom," of monarchy, which he affirms is alone responsible for battle order against a numerically superior enemy. In contrast to the *Encomium*, *physis* can be overcome in battle by fear of the ruler. Xerxes interprets human nature as feeble and, by extension, as an object of

[19] Cf. Sappho F 16 Lobel-Page. [20] For this passage, Segal (1962), 107–8, 124–5, is excellent.

imperial mastery.[21] Xerxes' own representation as a transhumanist spectacle supports the ruler's analysis of his ability to amplify the nature of his men: he is regularly described as transcending the category of the human. In an observation made by an anonymous Greek while seeing Xerxes cross the Hellespont, he is identified as Zeus (7.56.2); similarly, the Macedonian ruler, Alexander, explains to the Athenians that they must capitulate to the king after Salamis because of the superhuman force of Xerxes: "Truly, the power of the King is something beyond that of man, ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον (*hyper anthropon*), and his arm is long" (8.140.β2). His position as a spectacle supports the ruler's analysis of his ability to amplify the nature of his men. Again, Xerxes' speech sounds suspiciously similar to the earlier narratorial endorsement of the strategy of improving upon man's constitution and defeating superior numerical forces in battle during the Carian revolt through compulsion (ἀναγκαζόμενοι).[22]

Reading the overall message of the dialogue as an endorsement of *nomos*, however, rides on the response of Demaratus that follows. The exiled Spartan king reacts to Xerxes' disbelief that a man would fight against superior numbers without compulsion by affirming that he or any Spartan would go into battle in such circumstances if compelled by some necessity. He continues:

> ἐλεύθεροι γὰρ ἐόντες οὐ πάντα ἐλεύθεροί εἰσι· ἔπεστι γάρ σφι δεσπότης νόμος, τὸν ὑπερδειμαίνουσι πολλῷ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ σοὶ σέ. ποιεῦσι γῶν τὰ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ἀνώγῃ· ἀνώγει δὲ τὠυτὸ αἰεί, οὐκ ἐῶν φεύγειν οὐδὲν πλῆθος ἀνθρώπων ἐκ μάχης, ἀλλὰ μένοντας ἐν τῇ τάξι ἐπικρατέειν ἢ ἀπόλλυσθαι. (7.104.4–5)
>
> For although they are free, they are not free in every way; for a despotic *nomos* is set over them, which they fear even more than your men fear you. At any rate, they do whatever it commands. It always commands the same thing, not allowing them to retreat from battle for any number of men, but by remaining in battle formation, to prevail or be destroyed.

The opposition of Xerxes' appeal to a superior *physis* as leading to victory, on the one hand, and Demaratus' to the Spartan *nomos* of remaining in battle, on the other, has suggested to some that Herodotus is engaging in the famous *nomos-physis* debate. As noted above, he is often interpreted as

[21] A Homeric strategy as well, as we see from Nestor, 4.299–300: κακοὺς δ᾽ ἐς μέσσον ἔλασσεν | ὄφρα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλων τις ἀναγκαίῃ πολεμίζοι. ("He thrust the cowards into the middle so that, even unwilling, one would fight by compulsion.")

[22] Baragwanath (2008), 109, draws attention to the rationality of Xerxes' prediction.

weighing in on the side of the former; according to Thomas, "he is making a stand for *nomos*."[23] Yet, this reading of the speeches neglects correspondences in the exchange between the Persian monarch and the exiled Spartan one.

Demaratus' response closely aligns with the sentiments expressed by Xerxes, with a shared stress on compulsion and objectification.[24] He implicitly accepts the limits placed on human nature that are raised by Xerxes. He counteracts these limits, however, with Spartan custom, which he presents as a force of even greater compulsion than the institution of Persian monarchy. For Demaratus, it is *nomos* that masters human nature. In parallel with Xerxes' configuration of this power dynamic, it does so by rejecting autonomy. Like Persia, Sparta is not free on the battlefield. Their custom acts as a despot that is "set over" (ἔπεστι) them. Fear too has significance on the battlefield for Sparta; the ὑπερ in ὑπερδειμαίνω (*hyperdemaino*), accepting Wilson's reading, ratchets up Sparta's dread in a rhetorical outbidding of Xerxes' δειμαίνω.[25] The whip that might thrust Persians into action against a superior force finds an analog in the Spartan *nomos* of conquering or dying in battle formation, where retreat is not an option. Far from setting up a *nomos-physis* antithesis, this characterization reveals the similarity of Spartan and Persian strategies of success in warfare. For both speakers, compulsion and fear motivate exceptional valor. According to Xerxes, it inspires men to go beyond themselves. Demaratus does not disagree; his revision is simply in the fear-inducing agent – Xerxes had identified this with his own person or with one-man rule, Demaratus with despotic *nomos*.

[23] Thomas (2000), 125; Provencal (2015), 53–6, echoes this; Hunter (1982), 266, is similarly optimistic. Millender (2002a) is instructive in that she otherwise finds the *Histories* critical of the Spartan dyarchy, portrayed as the perversion of Athenian democratic policies but in this debate sees the focus shift to a Greek/Persian, good/bad polarity, and that it, 29, "portrays the Spartans as representative of Hellas. Sparta functions as the champion of Greek freedom most explicitly in Herodotus' account of the dialogue between the Persian king Xerxes and the exiled Spartan dyarch Demaratus after the Persians' crossing of the Hellespont."

[24] *Pace* Forsdyke (2001), *passim*, who sees this as an opposition between tyranny and freedom, Persia and Athens. Millender (2002b) and more recently Balot (2014), have both argued against an encomiastic reading of this passage and instead claim that the Spartan system, reliant as it is upon compulsion and fear as the engineer of courage, is subtly critiqued. Spartan courage is questioned by, e.g., Themistocles, who bids the Spartans to stand their ground and be brave, 8.62.1. Forsdyke (2001), Millender (2002b), and Balot (2014) brand this as "Athenian" courage and superior to that of the Spartans.

[25] Van Herwerden adopts the manuscript reading, ὑποδειμαίνω, which is not found elsewhere in the *Histories*, but, loc. cit., he questions "a τὸν ὑπερδειμαίνουσι?" and rightly points to the latter's presence at 5.19.1, where it is used of the Macedonian ruler Amyntas' fear of the Persians. N.b. Democritus' ethical theory reacts negatively to fear as a motivator, cf. DK 68 B 174; B 215.

The correspondences between these examples are reinforced by a discussion of citizen bravery from the fourth century BCE. In Aristotle's treatment of courage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he aligns the motivation of fear with compulsion and an inferior variety of bravery on the battlefield (1116a). Generals compel such men to second-rate courageous action, and the examples given are of men marshaled before a ditch or some such obstacle and those beaten by their commanders for moving backwards (1116a–b). Courage, Aristotle declares, cannot be based on compulsion but on nobility. This configuration of military bravery throws into relief the ethical conclusions that could, at least by the fourth century, be drawn from involuntary military action. In the *Histories*, surpassing human nature inspires involuntary courage.

Rather than interpreting this debate as a dialogue on Spartan *nomos* and Persian *physis*, it turns out to concentrate on a different set of preoccupations.[26] Both speakers suggest their respective armies will have fear instilled in them, one by the *nomos* of despotism, the other by the despotism of *nomos*. *Nomos* and *physis* are opposed but only insofar as the force of *nomos* is said to compel the transcendence of *physis* among Persians and Greeks. Demaratus is thus not "right" and Xerxes "wrong." The dialogue encourages a test of the relationship between word and deed. It also establishes an expectation that surpassing *physis* will play a key causal role in the Greco-Persian Wars, but, as we shall see, Xerxes and Demaratus' assertions are undermined by the historical action.

Demaratus' declaration *is* supported by looking immediately ahead to the Spartan stand at Thermopylae.[27] Yet, if we move back in time to Herodotus' first introduction of Demaratus, this statement rings rather oddly coming as it does from a Spartan king who is responsible for the revision of *nomos* in Sparta for abandoning his place in battle.[28] In Book 5, during the allied Peloponnesian campaign against Athens, Sparta and its allies from the Peloponnese marched to battle in western Attica at Eleusis.

[26] *Pace* Thomas (2000), 111, "Certainly *nomos* and an all embracing influence on the whole polis (society) are here given the clinching argument and analysis which are eventually born out by events."

[27] With Scardino (2007), 203–4. For its being specifically related to Sparta, Bowie *Introduction*, 7.

[28] One way to account for this might be to find that Demaratus' character is a disjointed one. For this interpretation and *Quellenforschung*, see Jacoby (1913), 392–5. Millender (2002b), 35–6, draws attention to the irony of the fact that he is a *deposed* king giving a speech on legality, and states, 35, "The *topos* of illegality structures the Demaratus *logos* from beginning to end." She does not note the passage in Book 5, though it supports her argument; she focuses on the circumstances of his dubious birth, the absence of law-abiding Spartans in the context of his exile, and the *topos* of Spartan susceptibility to corruption.

They intended to fight a pitched battle to install Isagoras as tyrant of Athens (5.74.1). Demaratus is introduced as co-ruler with Cleomenes – who will later contrive his exile (6.61–7) – and as having led out his army in concert with Cleomenes. Up to this point, the Corinthians have acted as the allies of Sparta; however, here they ultimately decide against supporting the assault on Attica and disband their forces. Abruptly, Demaratus too abandons the campaign, "although not at a variance with Cleomenes until then" (5.75.1). This leads to a break in protocol. Up to this point, both kings had gone on campaign together as allies; but as a result of this event, the *nomos* mandating that both kings be present on campaign is changed: "It was as a result of this break between the two kings that the rule was established at Sparta that when the army went on campaign both kings were not allowed to go with it at the same time. For before this they both followed" (5.75.2). Read against this background, Demaratus' professed rigidity in observing Spartan *nomos* on standing in battle sounds rather odd.[29] Placing the former king's speech in its context in Spartan historical action in the narrative complicates the traditional interpretation of the jingoistic superiority of Spartan *nomos*, or, metonymically, for many scholars, Greek *nomos*.[30] This finds corroboration in the famed narratorial intrusion on the critical role of the Athenians in the Greek victory. Had they abandoned the alliance, Herodotus reasons, the Spartans would have been left to stand alone against Persia and either died noble deaths *or* come to terms with Xerxes (7.139.4).[31]

As already observed, Thermopylae stands most obviously in responsion to the Demaratus-Xerxes debate. Sparta's heroic stance against the Persian forces makes Demaratus' words on the despotic *nomos* of standing one's ground a reality. At first, the allied Hellenic force experiences success against the Persians, but if there is a leitmotif on the cause of victory, it is related to *kosmos*, not *physis* or *nomos*: οἱ δὲ Ἕλληνες κατὰ τάξις τε καὶ κατὰ ἔθνεα κεκοσμημένοι ἦσαν, καὶ ἐν μέρεϊ ἕκαστοι ἐμάχοντο (7.212.2: "The Greeks were arrayed by contingent and by nation and each people fought in turn"). Following the discovery of the Persian forces moving around the mountain pass, the Spartan king Leonidas famously dismissed the allies, except the Thebans, his unwilling hostages, and the Thespians,

[29] Anaxandridas too disturbs Spartan *nomos* by keeping two wives, 5.40.2.

[30] This supports an argument of Boedeker (1987), 193, who finds that "the *ambivalence of language* is especially marked in stories which crystallize around Demaratus," and at 194, "in several Demaratus stories, the reliability of speech is brought into question."

[31] The Athenians are said to realize the Spartan penchant for saying one thing and thinking another before Plataea, 9.54.1.

his most zealous ally. Herodotus explains that he did not want to have the allies leave "in disorder" (7.220.4: ἀκόσμως) after internal division. Initially, the foreigners fall in droves due to the whips of their commanders, which keep the soldiers moving forward unabatedly (7.223.3). This detail, a snapshot of Xerxes' strategy in the dialogue, dramatizes the *nomos* of despotism.[32] As a test case, it fails, and compulsion leads to precisely the opposite of the intended effect – the soldiers are unable to exercise bravery and end up dying en masse. In parallel, Leonidas plays out the role outlined for him by Demaratus in his speech. Knowledge of their imminent deaths pushes Spartan courage to its peak. Faced with extreme numerical inferiority, they are nevertheless able to destroy a number that defies *logos* (7.223.3). The explanatory power for their might is grounded in the geographical and strategic conditions that have pinned them between two hostile forces. Like the Carians, the Spartans have no option of escape. Leonidas has ruled out survival, and Demaratus' projection of the compulsion of standing firm in the face of an enemy does play out as he had predicted.

However, the dialectic between the Demaratus-Xerxes debate and action on the battlefield does not cease here; it continues into the battles of both Salamis and Plataea, confirming the hypothesis that this is a key passage for reflecting on Hellenic victory and success. Just prior to the sea battle at Salamis, Herodotus reports that Themistocles gave the best of the battle orations. He narrates:[33]

> ἠώς τε διέφαινε καὶ οἱ σύλλογον τῶν ἐπιβατέων ποιησάμενοι . . . προηγόρευε εὖ ἔχοντα[34] μὲν ἐκ πάντων Θεμιστοκλέης· τὰ δὲ ἔπεα ἦν πάντα <τὰ> κρέσσω τοῖσι ἥσσοσι ἀντιτιθέμενα, ὅσα δὴ ἐν ἀνθρώπου φύσι καὶ καταστάσι ἐγγίνεται· παραινέσας δὲ τούτων τὰ κρέσσω αἱρέεσθαι καὶ καταπλέξας τὴν ῥῆσιν, ἐσβαίνειν ἐκέλευσε ἐς τὰς νέας. (8.83.1–2)
>
> Dawn was breaking and they made an assembly of the marines . . . out of all, Themistocles was proclaiming splendidly: his words were opposing all of that which is stronger to the weaker, as many things as are innate in the constitution and condition of man. After exhorting them to choose the stronger of these, he concluded his speech and ordered the men to embark on their ships.

[32] Forsdyke (2001), 351–2.

[33] On the rhetorical prowess of Themistocles in general, Baragwanath (2008), 279–322, is essential reading. Cf. too Evans (1991), 24.

[34] I follow Stein's translation ad loc. "Treffliches." Wilson (2015), 162, defines εὖ ἔχοντα as "well balanced" or "coherent"; he interprets Themistocles' speech as "a measured assessment of the pros and cons of giving battle."

In a valuable article, Vasiliki Zali draws attention to the oddness of the inclusion of this brief, indirect exhortation.[35] Its placement is perfectly primed for a long speech rousing the Greeks to action in the face of innumerable odds, and Herodotus inexplicably misses the opportunity for a rhetorical display piece by Themistocles, architect of the naval victory. How and Wells are typical in their summation, stating that Herodotus, "spares us the well-worn antitheses, victory and defeat, freedom and slavery."[36] According to Zali, narrative gapping invites the reader to supply the material herself and creates a dialogue between the narrator and the implied reader.[37] Filling the gap has relied upon the timeworn *topoi* of battle exhortations: "In all probability, it involved the most common harangue antitheses, such as victory vs. defeat, freedom vs. slavery, bravery/glorious death/honour vs. cowardice/shameful death/disgrace."[38] This finding corresponds well to Thucydides' Nicias, whose speech rousing the trierarchs before the battle at the harbor in Syracuse is in *oratio obliqua*. Nicias' reaction to the situation is put in generic terms as "the sort of thing men experience" (7.69.2: ὅπερ πάσχουσιν) in great danger. Fittingly, his harangue is also boiler plate, as he exhorts the Athenians by saying "what men in such a critical moment would say, not guarding against seeming to someone to recite the old commonplaces" (7.69.2: ὅσα ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ ἤδη τοῦ καιροῦ ὄντες ἄνθρωποι οὐ πρὸς τὸ δοκεῖν τινὶ ἀρχαιολογεῖν φυλαξάμενοι εἴποιεν ἄν) – with the specification that such commonplaces include referring to wives, children, and the ancestral gods.

However, the early date of the composition of the *Histories* and the vigorous *Nachleben* of pre-battle speeches in ancient historiography should caution against an early exhaustion in the genre, particularly considering the reputation for eloquence that Herodotus enjoyed throughout antiquity. More to the point, the *idées reçues* on the content of the speech have obscured the actual significance of the language used to describe it. Themistocles is said to have opposed the stronger to the weaker;

[35] Zali (2013), also found in (2015), 81–3, 252–3. Scardino (2007), 265–6 n. 506, states that its summary form is to hasten the narrative momentum toward the battle.

[36] How-Wells 8.83. Cf. the exhortation heard by the Persians, Aes. *Pers.* 401–5: ὦ παῖδες Ἑλλήνων ἴτε | ἐλευθεροῦτε πατρίδ', ἐλευθεροῦτε δὲ | παῖδας, γυναῖκας, θεῶν τέ πατρῴων ἕδη | θήκας τε προγόνων: νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών ("Children of the Greeks, advance! Free the fatherland, free your children, wives, the seats of the ancestral gods and the tombs of your ancestors! Now the struggle is on behalf of all!"). For the sentiment, see Immerwahr (1966), 282 n. 127.

[37] See Zali (2013), 471 n. 34, with bibliography on the *topos* of the dialogic Herodotean narrative.

[38] Zali (2013), 470. For a similar assessment, see Stein 8.83.5; and Macan 8.83. Alternatively, Thomas (2000), 266, nicely suggests a connection between Themistocles' speech and Protagoras' philosophy of making the weaker argument stronger.

specifically, those things that are inborn stronger and weaker in the *physis* and *katastasis* of man. He advises the hoplites to choose the stronger of these and concludes with an order to board.[39] The substance of the exhortation then is the nature of man, his strengths and weaknesses. This language rules out the possibility that this was an opposition between, for example, victory and defeat, or freedom and slavery. These are not referents for either *physis* or *katastasis*.[40] Instead, Themistocles spurs the hoplite soldiers to choose the "strong" within their own natures.

Particularly interesting is the collocation φύσι καὶ καταστάσι – as striking as it is rare.[41] Prior to the Hellenistic period, the two are seldom used in conjunction. In addition to the *Histories*, only Hippocratic and philosophical treatises, tellingly, connect the terms.[42] *Airs, Waters, Places* describes the deficiencies of the climate of Scythia as leading to the flabbiness of the bodies of their men, which cannot dry and become firm "in such a land, with their *physis* and climate" (19: ἐν τοιαύτῃ χώρῃ καὶ φύσει καὶ ὥρης καταστάσει). The treatise differentiates between human *physis* and the condition of the seasons in order to make a larger point on the necessity of bearing in mind the human constitution, geological conditions, and climatological considerations as a doctor. Closer to the language in the speech of Themistocles is Herodotus' near contemporary, Democritus.[43] In a surviving fragment, the philosopher from Abdera meditates on the acquisition of children: "people suppose that having children is one of the necessities from *physis* and from some ancient condition" (DK 68 B 278: ἀνθρώποισι τῶν ἀναγκαίων δοκεῖ εἶναι παῖδας κτήσασθαι ἀπὸ φύσιος καὶ καταστάσιός τινος ἀρχαίης).[44] Democritus' collocation rationalizes the human drive to produce children as a product of *physis* and *katastasis*, the internal and instinctive drives

[39] Cf. 6.109.2, where Miltiades persuades Callimachus to stay and avoid the "weaker" plan of retreat.

[40] Nor is *nomos*, *pace* Evans (1991), 24, "Thus, though men might not alter their *physis*, within the limits it set, they could make choices, and their *nomoi* were based on a choice, or a series of choices that they or their ancestors had made."

[41] Powell, s.v. κατάστασις, which he identifies as meaning "nature" twice; here and at 2.173 in the context of Amasis' understanding of the human constitution as being like that of a bow, needing both rest and exercise alike.

[42] The collocation is found in Pl. *Resp*. 497b1, 547b5; *Phlb*. 42d4; and the Hippocratic *de Morb*. 3.15.19.

[43] The fragment is noted at Evans (1991), 24, *en passant*; he then concludes unpersuasively, "What Themistocles wanted his men to choose was the quality that would drive them forward into battle, and that quality might be expressed as *nomos*." Without the language of *nomos* it is hasty to assume its presence, but this illustrates the lengths scholars go to get Demaratus' speech to apply following his dialogue with Xerxes.

[44] Humphreys (1987), 219, notes the similarities between Democritus and Herodotus in terms of their organization of data through sequence and connection.

within man. He goes on to argue that these drives are analogously present in the animal kingdom. The philosopher's use of the terms in the context of man points to the unique inflection of this language in Themistocles' speech and tells against the interpretation that these terms stand in for *topoi* common to the battle exhortation. Their association with the milieu of the Presocratic intellectual should not be discounted.

Surpassing *physis* is a concern among Presocratic thinkers and does not refer to hackneyed oppositions typical of exhortations before battle. In Palamedes' defense speech in the eponymous treatise by Gorgias, the hero exonerated himself from the suspicion that he might have been motivated to commit treason to enrich himself by appealing to his self-mastery:

> For those spending a great deal need an abundance of wealth, not those stronger than the pleasures of *physis* (οὐχ οἱ κρείττονες τῶν τῆς φύσεως ἡδονῶν), but those enslaved by pleasures and seeking to acquire honours from riches and magnificence. (DK 82 B 11.15)

Here, *physis* takes on an appetitive quality familiar from Thucydides, and Palamedes reveals the negative elements associated with *physis* – its acquisitive tendencies. In contrast to the many who attempt to gain honor, Palamedes is free from this psychological enslavement.[45]

A fragment of Democritus warns against man's exceeding his *physis*:[46]

> The cheerful individual must not undertake many things, not in a private capacity or public one, and in what he does undertake he should not choose to do what is beyond his power and his *physis* (ὑπέρ τε δύναμιν αἱρεῖσθαι τὴν ἑωυτοῦ καὶ φύσιν). (DK 68 B 3)

Viewing the self as an obstacle to be overcome is not uncommon. It is frequently found in Plato, who turns to the ethical implications of rising above oneself by interiorizing the battle. In the *Republic*'s discussion of soundness of mind as a kind of order, Socrates refers to "mastery over certain pleasures and desires, as they say that someone is stronger than himself" (430e: καὶ ἡδονῶν τινων καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ἐγκράτεια, ὥς φασι κρείττω δὴ αὑτοῦ). He draws out the oddity of the expression κρείττω

[45] Similar is Thucydides at 1.76.3.

[46] The text is accepted as authentic by D-K; however, Laks-Most D 228 print this in italics, an admission that Democritus' fragments can be extremely difficult to distinguish from the rich tradition of pseudepigraphy that collected under his name. It is tempting to see this, in line with the association of surpassing *physis* with emotional disturbance, as a breach of the aesthetic disposition of the "cheerful" individual. For Democritus, human *physis* is in fact weaker than fortune, but its stability gives it greater strength, e.g., DK 68 B 176.

αὑτοῦ, which implies that the same individual can be both superior and inferior to himself. This is explained as follows:

> "But," I said, "this phrase seems to me to want to say that something better and something worse in man himself exists as concerns his soul, and whenever that which is better by nature (τὸ βέλτιον φύσει) is in control of the worse element, that this communicates 'better than himself' (τὸ κρείττω αὑτοῦ), at any rate, it is praise. And when the better (being smaller) is ruled by the quantity of the worse – by poor upbringing or some association – this is to find fault with as an insult and to call someone 'worse than himself' (ἥττω ἑαυτοῦ) and as one depraved." (431a)

The paradoxical suitability of the phrase "greater than oneself" gives Socrates the opportunity to refer to the subdivision of the soul. Man's struggle for power between better and worse elements, with the triumph of the former, is carefully connected to Socrates' conception of the stable workings of the soul. The superior element within it is a regular constituent (φύσει). Socrates expands the application of the phrase from the individual to Kallipolis, assuring his interlocutors that the worse elements within the citizenry will be ruled by the select minority who are "best in their nature" (431c: βέλτιστα μὲν φῦσιν) or in education. The connection made between becoming "greater than oneself" and *physis* in Plato supports reading the phrase as commenting on human nature.[47] Like the *Republic*, the *Laws* highlights the presence of a superior and inferior within man, "each one of us is greater than himself and worse than himself" (626e–7a: εἷς ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ὁ μὲν κρείττων αὑτοῦ, ὁ δὲ ἥττων ἐστί).[48] Cleinias declares that there is a war within the human, in which victory over the self is the greatest victory and defeat of the self the worst possible outcome (626e). While the term φύσις is not present in this passage, this discourse draws on the same conception of the internal constitution of man as a site of contestation, a sphere for conquest or defeat.

Themistocles' speech too opposes the strong in man to its opposite, the weak, stressing the presence of both elements in the constitution and condition of man. The reference is strengthened by the use of ἀντιτιθέμενα (*antitithemena*), the verbal term for "making an antilogy," an argumentative strategy famously associated with Protagoras.[49]

[47] The passage is discussed in connection to the doubled *physis* of man at Plut. *De virt. mor.* 450d–e. The connection between being "greater than oneself" and *physis* is also explicit at Isoc. *Antid.* 191.

[48] Pl. *Leg.* 626e–7d, for a discussion on self-mastery.

[49] On the better and worse arguments, see Ar. *Nub.* 882–4: ὅπως δ' ἐκείνω τὼ λόγω μαθήσεται | τὸν κρείττον', ὅστις ἐστί, καὶ τὸν ἥττονα | ὃς τἄδικα λέγων ἀνατρέπει τὸν κρείττονα. ("See to it that he learns those two *logoi*, the stronger, whatever that is, and the weaker, which overturns the stronger by speaking what is contrary to justice.") Aristotle echoes this at *Rhet.* 1402a24 = DK 80 A 21,

Themistocles, then, suggests that one may select the stronger impulse within nature and, in doing so, go beyond the normal workings of *physis*, in which these elements commingle. Themistocles thus inscribes within his exhortation the terms that Xerxes and Demaratus had – he endeavors to better the constitution of the Greeks – but does so in a way that de-emphasizes external compulsion and instead draws attention to the individual capacity to choose (αἱρέεσθαι) betterment, in a manner evocative of Plato's Socrates. This de-emphasis of external compulsion is, however, tempered by his speech to Aristides, just prior to his battle speech. Aristides had reported to Themistocles that the Greek navy was encircled by the Persians, a fact that Themistocles then took credit for as a necessary stratagem to get the disunited Greek forces to fight at Salamis. He explains, "for it was necessary when the Greeks were not willing to begin, to bring them over even unwilling" (8.80.1: ἔδεε γάρ, ὅτε οὐκ ἑκόντες ἤθελον ἐς μάχην κατίστασθαι οἱ Ἕλληνες, ἀέκοντας παραστήσασθαι). So, though reported in indirect speech and only in brief, the substance of this oration returns to a key debate staged within the *Histories*, namely, valor's relationship to *physis*. Themistocles couches this in the language of the weak versus the strong within the individual and sets the first clash within man, as Gorgias, Democritus, and Plato do, and only after this in relation to the war between the Greeks and Persians. Of course, he has stage-managed the clash from the beginning, compelling the Greeks to fight as Xerxes did with the allied Persian forces.

Yet the narrative of the battle itself plays out unexpectedly. Paradoxically, it is the Persians who are singled out as becoming "braver than themselves," rather than the Greek forces Themistocles has just addressed, or the Spartans, as Demaratus implied: καίτοι ἦσάν γε <ἄνδρες ἀγαθοὶ> καὶ ἐγένοντο ταύτην τὴν ἡμέρην μακρῷ ἀμείνονες αὐτοὶ ἑωυτῶν ἢ πρὸς Εὐβοίῃ, πᾶς τις προθυμεόμενος καὶ δειμαίνων Ξέρξην, ἐδόκεέ τε ἕκαστος ἑωυτὸν θεήσεσθαι βασιλέα (8.86).[50] Fear is

where he reports of Protagoras' method, καὶ τὸ τὸν ἥττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν τοῦτ' ἔστιν. Provencal (2015), 39, rightly sees Themistocles as "practiced in the Protagorean art of antilogic" and cites this passage but does not observe its connection to the tradition that states that Protagoras opposed the "better" and "worse" arguments, instead noting simply that: "His argument thus makes rhetorical use of the Protagorean art of constructing two sides to every argument"; in fact, Protagoras' tendency to oppose better and worse is being alluded to by Themistocles.

[50] "And yet they were and they became noble men on that day, far better than themselves – or than at Euboea – everyone showing himself eager and fearing Xerxes, each seeming to think that the king himself was watching." For translation of this passage, Stein ad. loc., compares it with 2.25.5: αὐτὸς ἑωυτοῦ ῥέει πολλῷ ὑποδεέστερος ἢ τοῦ θέρεος; I follow more closely Macan 8.86, who holds that Hdt. is compressing two thoughts into a single sentence.

highlighted, (δειμαίνων) and its effectiveness is confirmed by the fact that the Persian navy is ἀμείνονες ἑωυτῶν, language that readily evokes Xerxes' words, γενοίατ' ἂν δειμαίνοντες τοῦτον καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἑωυτῶν φύσιν ἀμείνονες. Salamis showcases the success of Xerxes' stratagem – his fleet does appear to display a superior valor under the gaze of its despot.[51] This is an endorsement of the sentiments expressed by Xerxes to Demaratus – the *nomos* of despotism affects *physis* in battle. The Persian navy's ignominious defeat at Artemisium may well be partly attributed to the absence of its leader overseeing the event, as Xerxes himself concludes (8.69).

Yet the triumph over nature compelled by *nomos* through the gaze of the despot is highly qualified. It is immediately preceded by the aetiology of Greek victory: Herodotus narrates that this was accomplished by fighting just as the allied Greeks had at Thermopylae, with *kosmos*,[52] "in an orderly arrangement," and *kata taxin*, in the "order of battle," and he contrasts this with the invaders who were not drawn up in battle order nor acting with "intention," *nous*.[53] The denouement of the battle illustrates the limits of transhumanism as a causal factor and ultimately validates other elements as explaining success. Certainly, Greece and Persia diverge, but their opposition is not one of Greek *nomos* versus Persian *physis*. There is greater nuance, pitting *kosmos* and intention over the *nomos* of monarchy and an army momentarily superior to itself.[54]

Chris Pelling has convincingly shown that *kosmos* is a "keyword" in the Plataea narrative.[55] Salamis has perhaps set up the expectation of an "orderly arrangement" on the Greek defensive, but this is partially deflated through the allied forces' continued quarrelling and indecision.[56] On the other side of the battle lines, Mardonius is amazed by the Lacedaemonians' lack of order. Although he has arrayed the Persian troops against the Spartans – forces explicitly said to be by far superior in number (9.31.2), in a return to Xerxes' claim – they exchange positions with the Athenians. Later, the Spartans retreat from the battlefield with the rest of the Greek

[51] With Bowie *Introduction*, 7, "the improved Persian performance under Xerxes' gaze at Salamis supports his argument." *Pace* Immerwahr (1966), 282, "Seated on the shore with a full view of the participants, he expects his troops to fight much better at Salamis than at Artemisium . . .. But his supervision is futile."

[52] Bowie 8.86, "Aesch. *Pers*. 399–400, also stresses the order of the Greeks."

[53] As predicted by Themistocles, 8.60.γ. Macan 9.59: "κόσμος is the general expression or the whole result of νοῦς: τάξις is the particular position in the battle-array, cf. 8.86." Cf. Anaxagoras, who ties *nous* to resulting *kosmos* and *taxis*, DK 59 A 58.

[54] Provencal (2015), 179–85, unpersuasively reads a polar opposition between Greeks and Persians, with the prior embodying the principle of *nomos basileus* and the former the acquisitive *nomos physeos* throughout the text.

[55] Pelling (2019), 171. [56] Pelling (2019), 171, 183–4.

forces, an act that compels Mardonius to cross the Asopus and assume the weaker position to launch his attack.[57] When he finally leads the Persians against their enemies, his foreign armaments break into a run to follow them into battle "drawn up in battle formation without an orderly arrangement or battle line" (9.59.2: οὔτε κόσμῳ οὐδενὶ κοσμηθέντες οὔτε τάξι). In contempt of the Spartans, the Persian force rushes into action and finds itself entirely unprepared for hoplite warfare. In particular, they are hampered by inferior gear.[58] The *Histories* tells against assertions to the contrary and states that the Persians possessed equal courage and strength, even if they were poorly armed and lacking in cunning (9.62.3: λήματι μέν νυν καὶ ῥώμῃ οὐκ ἧσσονες ἦσαν οἱ Πέρσαι, ἄνοπλοι δὲ ἐόντες καὶ πρὸς ἀνεπιστήμονες ἦσαν καὶ οὐκ ὅμοιοι τοῖσι ἐναντίοισι σοφίην).[59] Greek victory is attributed to Persian weaponry and disorganization, not to exceptionalism in Hellenic *nomos* or *physis*.

The retreat of the Persians is likewise described as confused: "The Persians . . . fled utterly disordered to their own camp" (9.65.1: ἔφευγον οὐδένα κόσμον).[60] The general Artabazus, after seeing the Persian forces withdrawing, deserts the battle "without the same order" (9.66.3: οὕτω δὴ οὐκέτι τὸν αὐτὸν κόσμον κατηγέετο).[61] To drive the point home further, Herodotus inverts the paradigm by describing the movements of the Hellenic center after the victory of the Greeks at Plataea. The right center flank has taken up its position at the Heraion, and following the news of

[57] For Mardonius' disastrously incorrect assessment of the scenario, Flower-Marincola ad 9.48–49.1.

[58] This argument is valid even though these are the Persian *allies*. It remains that *physis* is demoted and *kosmos* elevated. The passage at 9.65 continues the *topos* of Persia's lack of order. See Bowie *Introduction*, 7.

[59] "Now the Persians were in no way inferior in courage or strength, but they were not well armed and in addition not properly trained and not equal in cunning to those who they opposed." For Persia's fatal lack of order during the retreat after Salamis, 8.117.2. The importance of *kosmos* as a rhetorical strategy in addition to a military one is evident at the assembly during which the Spartans reproach the Athenians for a putative treaty with the Persians on the grounds that it is, "in no way just nor orderly" (8.142.2: οὔτε γὰρ δίκαιον οὐδαμῶς οὔτε κόσμον). Plut. *Malice* 873f–874a, finds fault with the fact that the Spartans are not victorious because of their superior bravery but because of the dress of the Persians and observes that Herodotus awards the Persians in Plataea a competence they did not possess at Thermopylae. Flower-Marincola ad 9.62.3 must also be right in thinking that the glorification of the opponent leads to greater prestige for the victor.

[60] Cf. the attitude of the Persians and their allies after the capture of the palisade by the Lacedaemonians and Athenians, 9.70.4: οὐδὲν ἔτι στῖφος ἐποιήσαντο. This contrasts with Amompharetus' orderly retreat at 9.57.1.

[61] Redfield (1985), 116, in a standard interpretation of the battle of Plataea, offers: "The Greeks thus displayed the danger and also the power of their characteristic *nomos*. They are sometimes bad subordinates because each thinks himself entitled to his own ideas; they are not loyal to an overlord, but to an idea. But since each has made this idea his own, each is ready to die for it; they do not require an overlord to keep them in the ranks."

the Greek victory, their exhilaration leads to a disastrous lack of order, οἳ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ταῦτα, οὐδένα κόσμον ταχθέντες (9.69.1: "those who heard this were drawn up in no order"). This is spied by the Theban cavalry fighting in support of Persia (9.69.2: ἀπιδόντές σφεας οἱ Θηβαίων ἱππόται ἐπειγομένους οὐδένα κόσμον) and leads to the annihilation of the Greeks, who Herodotus concludes are destroyed "without any reason."[62]

In the conversation between Xerxes and Demaratus that prepares for the battles of Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea, Herodotus raises an expectation that overriding the limits of *physis* will play a key role in the unfolding of events. By surveying the potential of *physis* to act as a cause of success and defeat, the narrator taps into a prevalent strand of interpretation for the Hellenic victory over the Persians, as is clear from *Airs, Waters, Places*. In Salamis, the success of the Greeks is attributed to *kosmos*. At the battle of Plataea, it is the absence of *kosmos* among the Persians that contributes to their defeat.

Kosmos and related terms appear regularly in Homeric epic. There, they signal appropriate speech, ornamentation, and regulated action on the battlefield. This latter category is noteworthy for contextualizing Herodotus' integration of *kosmos*-language in the narration of the Greco-Persian Wars. In the *Iliad*, the sons of Atreus are "marshallers of armies" (1.16, 1.375); the rulers of the Greek forces at Troy "array" their soldiers to enter battle with the skill of goatherds who separate out their combined flocks (2.475–7); warriors order their charioteers to maintain "good order" (11.48, 12.85). When leaders are fallen or absent, such as Protesilaus and Philoctetes, others quickly take their places to arrange the soldiers (2.703–7, 2.726–7). Even when wounded, kings including Ajax, Odysseus, and Agamemnon supervise the organization of their warriors for battle (14.379–80). Alternatively, the absence of what is *kosmos* forbodes defeat and destruction. For example, Polydamas advises Hector against attacking the Achaean ships after seeing a portent, since it foreshadows a Trojan retreat from the ships "without order" and with many of their own left behind (12.225). And before Hector's death, Zeus laments how the Trojan despoiled Achilles' armor from the body of Patroclus "contrary to order" (17.205). In her work on the *kosmos*-polis analogy, Carol Atack has highlighted the intentionality of *kosmos*, as an order brought about by the effort of an individual ruler.[63] Applying this insight to the *Histories* suggests that by activating the *kosmos* motif at

[62] N.b. at Hdt. 3.13.1 the defeated Egyptians flee the Persians without *kosmos*, with negative results.
[63] Atack (2019), 170.

Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea, Herodotus relies upon the portrait of the Homeric warrior-ruler who both maintains order and brings victory on the battlefield.

Physis and the Stronger

A question, then, remains: why does the *Histories* invest in priming the reader for the importance of an enhanced *physis* only to eclipse it in the end? The answer to this question will take us beyond Plataea, into postwar success narratives. Hellenic victory in the Greco-Persian Wars spawned various impassioned explanations of the triumph. One of the most influential theses explained Greek victory by pointing to the superior European *physis*. As noted in Chapter 4, *Airs, Waters, Places* takes a position of soft biological determinism regarding European and Asian habitats, which naturalizes victory and defeat. Reading Hellenic victory in terms of *physis* holds that the Hellenic constitution is harder, braver, stronger, and renders comprehensible its domination of inferior *physeis*. Freedom is achieved, according to this model, due to the particularly doughty *physis* of the Europeans and slavery from the weak Asiatic one. This naturalization of domination and subjection in terms of *physis* became a commonplace – though a contested one – during the fifth and fourth centuries. If it is *physis* that the strong rule the weak, and the *physis* of the Hellenes is by nature heartier and braver than that of their opponents, then the Greek victory against Persia becomes all but preordained. This gestures to a debate on empire much discussed among philosophers on the right of the stronger to rule, a philosophy underwritten by an appeal to *physis*.

Democritus, for example, affirmed that "by *physis* ruling is natural for the stronger" (DK 68 B 267: φύσει τὸ ἄρχειν οἰκήιον τῷ κρέσσονι).[64] Thucydides too includes a theory of natural domination by which the Athenians argue that they possess a mandate to act upon their impulses to acquire more due to their power, while inferior states have a similar mandate to accept their enslavement.[65] Of course, it is Plato's *Gorgias* that

[64] Potentially to be read in connection with DK 68 B 34.

[65] Thucydides exhibits a pessimistic take on *physis* and its drive for more: see 1.76.3; 5.89; 5.91.2; 5.105.1–3. For this, Hunter (1982), 266–7, remains influential. The Athenians are not the only supporters of *physis* as the *sine qua non* of success: the Corinthians speaking at a war assembly just prior to the Peloponnesian War maintain that the League's bravery would enable them to survive, which they possessed by *physis*, something that could not be acquired by the Athenians by instruction, Th. 1.121 and Chapter 5 n. 15. For superior human *physis* in battle and the dangers associated with praising it, see Th. 2.35.2.

offers the most famous enunciation of this principle, through the mouthpiece of the young sophistic orator, Callicles.

> I suppose that nature itself proclaims it, that it is just that the better have more than the worse and the stronger more than the weaker. Nature shows that these things are so in many places, both among the other animals and all the cities and races of men, that justice has been judged in this way, that the stronger rule the weaker and have more (ὅτι οὕτω τὸ δίκαιον κέκριται, τὸν κρείττω τοῦ ἥττονος ἄρχειν καὶ πλέον ἔχειν). Since it was on which notion of justice that Xerxes campaigned against Greece and his father against the Scythians? But one could adduce thousands of similar cases. But I believe that these people act according to the *physis* of justice, and, yes by Zeus, even according to the *nomos* of *physis*, but perhaps not according to that *nomos* that we legislate. By moulding the best and strongest among ourselves, taking them from their youth, as we do with lions, enchanting and bewitching them we turn them into slaves, by telling them that they must have equality and that this is both good and just. (483d–4a)

In this response to Socrates, Callicles asserts the primacy of the "law of nature," whereby the strong rule the weak. As he continues, he expands on this to endorse a philosophy whereby the stronger *physis* rules over the weaker one, which is precisely the phenomenon that is found in *Airs, Waters, Places* and in the *Histories*:

> I suppose that if there were a man who had a sufficient *physis* (φύσιν ἱκανὴν), upon shaking off all these things and breaking through and escaping, after having trodden underfoot our written rules, magic spells, chants, and all our *nomoi* that are against *physis* (καὶ νόμους τοὺς παρὰ φύσιν ἅπαντας), that slave would rise up and show himself to be our master, and therein the justice of *physis* would blaze forth (ἐπαναστὰς ἀνεφάνη δεσπότης ἡμέτερος ὁ δοῦλος, καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἐξέλαμψεν τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον). (484a–b)

Callicles blurs the distinction between *physis* as the law of nature that prescribes the stronger rule the weaker and the principle that a stronger *physis* should rule the weaker. The scenario is one that was clearly current in the fifth century, as the *Anonymous Iamblichi* attempts to rebut a similar argument by stating that even if an individual were to emerge with a transcendent *physis*, invulnerable, unaffected by disease, without emotion, enormous, with an adamantine body and soul (6.2: εἰ μὲν δὴ γένοιτό τις ἐξ ἀρχῆς φύσιν τοιάνδε ἔχων, ἄτρωτος τὸν χρῶτα ἄνοσός τε καὶ ἀπαθὴς καὶ ὑπερφυὴς καὶ ἀδαμάντινος τό τε σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχήν), to whom it might be considered fitting to rule for gain, still, the author argues, he would not survive unless he allied himself to the people's *nomoi*.

In his address to Socrates, Callicles unpacks a thesis of inverted moralism, with the assertion that what is just (τὸ δίκαιον) exists by nature (φύσει) but that its justice contradicts the mandates of *nomos*.[66] Notably, the historical exempla deployed in order to justify this position are invasions perpetrated by Darius and Xerxes.[67] However, Callicles' historical exempla have been interpreted as ironic – his evidence consists of two dramatically unsuccessful campaigns – apparently undercutting his thesis.[68] Yet he may prove a more sensitive reader of Herodotus' Persian monarchs than has previously been realized; his exemplum recalls Darius' words in Book 4 during his disastrous invasion into the Scythian hinterland. In response to the offensive, the Scythians took to their customary nomadic lifestyle and successfully avoided fighting a pitched battle with the Persians in order to defeat their opponents through a war of attrition. Finally disenchanted with his wandering, Darius sent a message to the king of the Scythians, Idanthyrsus, bidding him enter into battle or capitulate, "and you, if you admit that you are inferior, after ceasing your run come to an audience with your master, bringing earth and water" (4.126: εἰ δὲ συγγινώσκεαι εἶναι ἥσσων, σὺ δὲ καὶ οὕτω παυσάμενος τοῦ δρόμου δεσπότῃ τῷ σῷ δῶρα φέρων γῆν τε καὶ ὕδωρ ἐλθὲ ἐς λόγους). Surrender is envisioned as proceeding from an awareness (συγγινώσκεαι) of one's own subordination (ἥσσων).[69] Darius' negotiations with the Scythian king are underwritten by a social order founded on the basis of strength and weakness. On this view, the weakness of Darius' subjects legitimates his despotism. Opposition is warranted only if there is a question of strength. This ethical system in international affairs informs the norms championed by Darius and brings the debate on whether the strongest *physis* should be victorious straight into the *Histories*. Xerxes too displays a high opinion of his own power and even wonders whether his inferior opponents will bother fighting or immediately surrender. The same logic operates subtly in the rhetorical address of Themistocles.[70] Herodotus continually stresses this statesman's understanding of human nature and recounts his ability to manipulate those around him.[71]

[66] For this, see Irwin (1995), 102–3.
[67] Dodds (1959), ad 483e2, for Callicles these two are, "not only natural but just."
[68] Dodds (1959), ad loc. Widely disseminated as a view, however, e.g., see Rutherford (1995), 163.
[69] A similar argument underpins Periander's statement to his son Lycophron at 3.52.5.
[70] Cf. Blösel (2001), 190, 195–7, for his assessment of Themistocles' egoism and *pleonexia* following the Greco-Persian Wars.
[71] See Baragwanath (2008), 306 n. 40, "Herodotus' Themistocles frequently displays sensitivity to the men's psychology when he addresses them"; for his rhetorical prowess generally, see 304–14.

His battle exhortation prior to Salamis revisits an understanding of *physis* in its positive and negative valences. Like Darius, Themistocles realizes that the weaker fall to the stronger and, to this end, encourages the hoplite force to embrace "the stronger," τὰ κρέσσω, in their *physis*. Still, in opposition to the rhetorical acrobatics of Callicles, to the speeches of Darius and Xerxes in the *Histories*, and even the presumption of Themistocles, the narrative itself does not treat *physis* as a variable of success in battle. When it is noted, as in the battle of Salamis, it is outmaneuvered by Hellenic order. The *Histories*' unwillingness to align transcending *physis* with victory in the battle at Salamis points to a counter-discourse – one that undermines the association of superior human nature with the path to rule. In this way, historical action participates in an ethical discourse that undercuts the mandate for domination that becomes increasingly common in the later fifth century, as is clear from Herodotus' successor, Thucydides.

In fact, alternatives to *physis* can be found in the fragments of several of the Presocratic intellectuals. In addition to the more familiar opposition of *physis* to *nomos*, the constitution of man was also paired and contrasted with "practice" in the context of virtue.[72] A fragment of Epicharmus first juxtaposes the two: "practice offers more gifts to friends than a good *physis*" (DK 23 B 33: ἁ δὲ μελέτα φύσιος ἀγαθᾶς πλέονα δωρεῖται φίλοις). Critias repeats the sentiment almost verbatim: ἐκ μελέτης πλείους ἢ φύσεως ἀγαθοί (DK 88 B 9). Democritus, a later contemporary, affirms the continued relevance of virtue and its maximization, using the same collocation, πλέονες ἐξ ἀσκήσιος ἀγαθοὶ γίνονται ἢ ἀπὸ φύσιος (DK 68 B 242: "more men become good from practice than *physis*"). The relationship between *physis* and *praxis* bleeds into a general discussion of instruction; Protagoras states that instruction cannot rely on human nature alone, φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται (DK 80 B 3).[73] Democritus' *physis* is shaped and harmonized by instruction, ἡ φύσις καὶ ἡ διδαχὴ παραπλήσιόν ἐστι. καὶ γὰρ ἡ διδαχὴ μεταρυσμοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, μεταρυσμοῦσα δὲ φυσιοποιεῖ (DK 68 B 33: "*physis* and instruction

[72] For the earliest opposition of *physis* to instruction, see Pind. *Ol.* 9.100–3, τὸ δὲ φυᾷ κράτιστον ἅπαν: πολλοὶ δὲ διδακταῖς | ἀνθρώπων ἀρεταῖς κλέος | ὥρουσαν ἀρέσθαι ("That which is by *physis* is altogether strongest: but many men rush to seize repute with virtue that is coached").

[73] See Pl. *Prt.* 351a–b, where Protagoras holds that bravery arises from *physis* and the nurture of the soul.

are alike, for instruction harmonizes man, and by harmonizing, shapes *physis*"). Even more elaborate is Socrates' response in Xenophon to an interlocutor's question on whether courage is acquired by natural disposition or by instruction:

> Next, when asked if courage is teachable or innate (εἴη διδακτὸν ἢ φυσικόν), he said, "I suppose that just as a body grows (φύεται) stronger than another body as regards pains, similarly a soul becomes by *physis* more powerful than another soul as regards suffering. For I see that people who have been brought up within the same system of laws and customs differ substantially from each other in daring. I think, however, that every *physis* grows stronger in courage through learning and practice (νομίζω μέντοι πᾶσαν φύσιν μαθήσει καὶ μελέτῃ πρὸς ἀνδρείαν αὔξεσθαι). For it is clear that if Scythians and Thracians were to receive shields and spears they wouldn't dare fight against Lacedaemonians; and it is obvious that the Lacedaemonians wouldn't be willing to contend with Thracians with small wicker shields and javelins or with Scythians with bows. Certainly, I see that men differ equally from each other by *physis* in everything else and that they improve a lot by means of diligence. It is clear from these things that all, both those who are more naturally gifted and those who are duller by nature (τοὺς εὐφυεστέρους καὶ τοὺς ἀμβλυτέρους τὴν φύσιν), should learn and practice the things in which they wish to become distinguished." (Xen. *Mem*. 3.9.1–3)

These responses should help to contextualize Herodotus' insistence on the import of *physis* as a category of analysis to be debated and tested in the *Histories*. Equally, they situate his rejection of this as an overarching explanatory paradigm. In the end, the text shows that bravery and military success are not exhausted by the *nomos-physis* dichotomy; analogously, Epicharmus, Critias, Democritus, Protagoras, and Xenophon's Socrates all give weight to elements in addition or in contradiction to the supremacy of *physis*.

Conclusion

Intellectual culture in the fifth century was gripped by a heated debate on the relationship of human nature to rule. Presocratic thinkers grappled with human *physis* in the context of conquest and domination, both internally and externally. Like these texts, Herodotus is preoccupied with *physis* as a conceptual framework, and he too explores the notion of human enhancement in the speeches of Pixodarus and Xerxes. Yet transhumanism is a fundamentally ambivalent motif, associated as it is with compulsion and despotism. Themistocles' speech, with its reorientation toward human agency, offers a different perspective from which to examine transcending

nature. Through these examples, the motif appears set to explain the success of the numerically inferior force of the Greeks against the Persians. But, on the battlefield it is the Persians and not the Greeks who transcend their natures, via the gaze of the monarch. As I have argued, this narrative bait and switch destabilizes the logic of the rule of the stronger, according to which the superior nature was the natural victor.

CHAPTER 6

Historical Inquiry and Presocratic Epistemology

The *Histories* shapes the expectations of its audience through its development of a distinctive horizon of expectation with regard to epistemic claims on truth, seeming, and likelihood.[1] At the outset of the work, Herodotus singles out the reports of the Persians and the Phoenicians on the origins of Greek and Asiatic enmity but then pivots to name he whom "I myself *know*, οἶδα αὐτός (*oida autos*), first began unjust deeds against the Greeks" (1.5.3).[2] This is an assured claim that stakes out an authoritative position. In retrospect, however, it comes as something of a surprise, as a distinctive feature of the Herodotean narrator is his reticence in expressing strong epistemic claims. This chapter investigates truth claims as a key area of Herodotus' engagement with philosophical intellectual culture and examines the contestation of accuracy and truth in light of this milieu.

In her brilliant dissection of Herodotus' voiceprint in the *Histories*, Carolyn Dewald draws attention to the only partially authoritative stance of the narrator.[3] On this reading, Herodotus assumes four distinct modes

[1] For an authoritative summary of truth claims in historiography, see Marincola (2007a), and 15–17, on Herodotus in particular. Brief assessments on truth in the *Histories* can be found in Starr (1968); Flory (1987), 49–80; and Lateiner (1989), 62–3, whose regard for Herodotus' positive conclusions on truthful *logos* is made clear by his appendix, 71, "Certainty Explicitly Achieved"; Thomas (2000), 228–35, specifically on ὀρθός; Harrison (2000), 24–9, (2004); Dewald (2002), 271, 279–81, 287–8; Cartledge and Greenwood (2002); Marincola (2007b), 60–6; Branscombe (2013), 6–11. Moles (1993), 95, is closest to my own position in his statement that, "in general, no ancient historian is more alive to the problem of truth." For truth opposed to *mythos* in the *Histories*, see Baragwanath and de Bakker (2012), 1–56; Chiasson (2012), 214–32.

[2] For a survey of the narrator's use of "knowledge" verbs, see Appendix 3.

[3] Dewald (1987); her position is reassessed in Dewald (2002), 279: "On a handful of occasions he says he knows something. But much more common than expressions of certainty are various forms of opinion, ranging from qualified belief to outright disbelief." For the narrator's unique voiceprint in the *Histories*, see Pearson (1941); Schwabl (1969); Dewald (1987), (1999), 224–33; (2002); Marincola (1987); Thomas (1993), (2000), 235–48; Fowler (1996), 76–87; Kuch (1995); Bakker (2002); de Jong (2004). For an assessment of meta-narratorial inquiry, see Christ (1994); Grethlein (2009); and most recently Branscombe (2013).

of narration: the onlooker, investigator, critic, and writer.[4] Writing on Herodotus' critical mode, Dewald exposes the notion of the historian as excavator of past "truths" as not strictly accurate. After all, he does regularly intrude upon his own account to undermine its veracity. Dewald demonstrates the way in which this is part of Herodotus' contract with the reader, who is enfranchised to undertake the work of interpreting and wrestling the truth from the text. One of the virtues of this reading is that it does not fall into the trap of interpreting Herodotus as displaying a cavalier approach to truth or a penchant for sensational fabrication.[5] Instead, Dewald points to the historian's encouragement of the reader to marvel at the difficulty of arriving at unmediated historical truth by drawing attention to unresolvable tensions in differing historical accounts, gaps in human understanding, and the lack of evidence necessary for robust truth claims.[6] The narrative emphasis is on the slippery status of knowledge. Critical claims "express the *histor*'s working experience of the fact that knowledge of the world is difficult to get, and partial and provisional at best."[7] Herodotus' *Histories* is not an authoritative account of accurate reporting but an authoritative account of the difficulty of reporting. This interpretation, which treats the narrator as dialogic, has rightly drawn attention to the inappropriateness of holding Herodotus to the standards of later historiography, which enshrines truth as its raison d'être, as in Polybius' famed declaration that "the fulfilment of history is truth" (τῆς μὲν οὖν ἱστορίας ἀλήθειαν εἶναι τέλος).[8] In discussing an analog to the Herodotean narrator, Dewald looks not to subsequent historiography but to the Homeric warrior. Like the hero, she finds that Herodotus grapples with a fearsome enemy, in this case, *logos*, rather than *erga*.[9] The presence of this struggle in the text contributes to his peculiar voiceprint.

[4] Dewald (2002), 277, revises this position slightly by affirming a unifying, single narrative voice.

[5] Cf. Starr (1968), 357, "Herodotus' delight in piquant tales often obscured his essential commitment to the truth." This position has its roots in antiquity, with the critical comments of, for example, Manetho, Plutarch, Valerius Pollio, Harpocration, and Libanius. For more on this reception of Herodotus, see Momigliano (1958); Riemann (1967); Murray (1972); and now Priestley (2014), 195–220. Modern scholarship has been similarly focused upon the extent to which the *Histories* can be verified when set against competing historical, archaeological, and epigraphical narratives. Notable in this school are Armayor (1978), (1985); West (1985); and Fehling (1989).

[6] Cf. Fowler (1996), 80, for Herodotus' discovery of the "problem of sources" as distinctive to his voiceprint.

[7] Dewald (1987), 163. A similar conclusion is reached by Hollmann (2011), 212–13, though he stresses his difference from Dewald. For pluralizing truths in the *Histories*, see de Jong (1999); Gray (2002); Griffiths (2006); Baragwanath (2008).

[8] Polyb. 34.4.2; see also Strabo 1.2.17.

[9] Dewald (1987), 147.

While I agree with Dewald's interpretation, Herodotus' regime of truth might be investigated in two additional ways. First, by the recognition that his discursive practices are not taking place in an intellectual vacuum. It is possible to interpret this continual problematization of truth as displaying an affinity with the sophistication found surrounding claims of truth and likelihood in Presocratic inquiry.[10] This context will suggest that in addition to envisioning the reader as at times continuing the investigation on a given subject, reservations on truth claims are part of a narratorial commentary on the enduring generation of new truths through truth's perpetual contestation. In this sense, the contract also consists of a willingness to accept the gaps within historical understanding. A second feature of Herodotus' distinctive voiceprint is his selective endorsement of positive truth claims. Like many of the Presocratic philosophers, truth is the criterion against which inquiry is measured, and in some instances, truth is the product of inquiry. As a rival in the marketplace of ideas, this competitive stance displays Herodotus' prowess at attaining *more* of the truth than his rivals.

The Obstacles to Truth

By the time of Herodotus' composition of the *Histories*, philosophers had been developing and debating epistemological questions for nearly a century. From the sixth century BCE, treatises on cosmology, botany, and geology emerged, and the texts written by the new *sophoi* came to challenge epic poetry's epistemic framework. A turn toward the philosophical tradition showcases a new critical view of truth claims alongside the demotion of traditional poetry's authority.[11] This vibrant intellectual

[10] *Pace* Müller (1981), 299.

[11] Homer comes under fire: DK 21 A 1.2–3; DK 22 B 21; B 42; B 56; B 105. As does Hesiod: DK 21 B 11; DK 22 B 106. On the subject of Presocratic epistemology generally, cf. especially Fränkel (1925); Lesher (1984), (1994); Hussey (1990); Detienne (1996); Tor (2017). For the understated narratorial presence in Homeric epic and hymns, see Morrison (2007), 45–8. Requests such as the one famously made by the epic poet for information from the Muses prior to the Catalogue of Ships seem to affirm that the Muses are present and know and impart all to the poet, *Il.* 2.485: ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε πάρεστέ τε ἴστέ τε πάντα. However, for opposition to this, see Halliwell (2012), 36–92, who attempts to undermine the idea of the epic poet as inspired by a divine, self-predicated truth. In this, he is anticipated by Pratt (1993). Heraclitus, at DK 22 A 22, implies that the philosopher views Homer as a purveyor of fictional narrative, as does Herodotus' statement that Homer did not think the voyage of Helen to Egypt would be suitable to epic, 2.116.1. Epic's other archaic exemplar, Hesiod, provocatively gestures toward the ambiguity of truth with respect to epic song by having the Muses in the *Theogony* hymn the infamous lyrics at 27–8, for which, *vide infra*.

context provided Herodotus with new paradigms for confronting and interpreting truth claims.

The poet-philosopher Xenophanes of Colophon gives early evidence for this self-awareness, drawing attention as he does to the limits of human cognition and the difficulties involved in classifying sensory information as knowledge. In one fragment, he places the following injunctions on attaining truth:

> καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὔτις ἀνὴρ γένετ'[12] οὐδέ τις ἔσται
> εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·
> εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
> αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.
>
> (DK 21 B 34)

> And no man has been born nor will there be one | who knows the clear truth about gods and what I say about all. | For if he happened to say what has been fulfilled to the highest degree, | he himself would nonetheless not know it, for seeming has been wrought upon all.

Xenophanes rules out the possibility of clear truth on the subjects of the divine and whatever followed in his text – potentially material on natural science.[13] A counterfactual follows: even granted that one were to speak what has come to pass, awareness of it would still elude the speaker. In the place of truth is *dokos*, potentially a coinage made by Xenophanes meaning "seeming" or "opinion," which, notably, characterizes the condition of man. The reservation in these verses hints at a form of weak skepticism or fallibilism.[14] In line with the epic poets whose Muses were only provisionally vehicles of historical truth, the philosophical poet emphasizes the problem of knowing that one knows. In opposition to this is what Xenophanes calls τὸ σαφές (*to saphes*), which conjures the sense of clarity only to rule it out.

In his pessimism on human knowledge, Xenophanes might have been justified in discarding *historie* entirely; however, another fragment qualifies this rejection: "let these things be supposed as similar to what is true" (DK

[12] Following the reading of Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 17d–e, with Laks-Most.

[13] For discussion of the fragment, see Lesher (1978), (1999); Fränkel (1993). Barnes (1979), i.136–43, rightly, in my view, concludes that some knowledge is attainable according to Xenophanes.

[14] Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 2.8. Fränkel (1955) argues that it is not a skeptical fragment but concerned with sensory perception and sight in particular; he is decisively dismissed by Heitsch (1966). Lesher (1978) gives a detailed reading; Mogyoródi (2006), 131, holds that Xenophanes does challenge sight and taste at DK 21 A 41a and B 38. Those in support of some form of skepticism are Heitsch (1966); Barnes (1979), i.138–43; Lesher (1992); Mogyoródi (2006).

21 B 35: ταῦτα δεδοξάσθω μὲν ἐοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι).[15] Xenophanes modifies the epic phrasing to express a *limited* account of truth. That is, Xenophanes' critique of man's ability to attain truth does not blossom into strong skepticism. We know from other fragments that the *sophos* was engaged in inquiry on the divine and on cosmology.[16] Elsewhere, he justified his project of inquiry as follows: "Not from the beginning did the gods reveal everything to mortals; but in time by seeking they come upon the better." (DK 21 B 18: οὔτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν, ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον). If truth is out of reach, at least the diachronic human search for knowledge brings an instrumental "better."[17] The details of Xenophanes' fallibilism, and whether or not it encompassed the phenomenal world or was restricted to the divine and natural sciences, are beyond the limits of this analysis. Essential is the conclusion that the Colophonian bard challenged truth claims, bringing a weak variant of skepticism into the field of philosophical inquiry.

Nearly all subsequent Presocratic philosophers commented on truth and the difficulty of attaining it. Alcmaeon's philosophical treatise began with the admonition that the gods alone had "certainty," σαφήνειαν, while mortals "inferred from signs," τεκμαίρεσθαι (DK 24 B 1). Heraclitus yields some evidence for a pessimistic view of man's ability to identify truth with the forensic metaphor that "men are poor defendants of the true" (ἄνθρωποι κακοὶ ἀληθινῶν ἀντίδικοι).[18] But it is Parmenides' *On Nature*, contemporaneous with Heraclitus' work, that is the most comprehensive meditation on second-order concerns about truth, falsehood, and seeming.[19] In the nearly 150 lines of the hexameter poem that survive, a philosophical treatise unfolds in the form of a meeting of two individuals,

[15] According to Arist. *Metaph.* Γ 5, 1010a5, the comic writer Epicharmus parodied Xenophanes' distinction between the true and the likely. This is playing on Hes. *Theog.* 27 and Hom. *Od.* 19.203, for which, *vide infra*; see Bryan (2012), 12 n. 30, for bibliography on the allusion.

[16] E.g., DK 21 B 27; B 28; B 29; B 30; B 31; B 33.

[17] Barnes (1979), i.142, suggests that due to the inexhaustible amount of sensory knowledge and the limited nature of human life, a strong conception of truth had to be abandoned. The point remains unclear either because of the obscurity of the philosopher or an accident of preservation. For the limits of human life in the speech of Solon to Croesus, see pp. 2, 32.

[18] DK 22 B 133. For a discussion of the epistemological vocabulary used by Heraclitus, see Lesher (1983), *passim*.

[19] For the titles of Presocratic texts as later inventions, see Chapter 4 n. 10. It is probable that Parmenides wrote his single philosophical treatise in the second quarter of the fifth century, cf. Pl. *Parm.* 127a–c. This dating is preferable to that of Diog. Laert. 9.23, who gives an earlier *floruit* based on the unreliable Apollodorus. For a discussion of Parmenides' life and dating, see Guthrie (1965), 1–3. For the relationship between Xenophanes and Parmenides, see Fränkel (1955), 348–9; Heitsch (1966), 235; Lesher (1992), 157, 183; Mogyoródi (2006), 149–57; see also Palmer (2009),

an unnamed Youth, who begins the narration, and a female divinity, whose two-part discourse constitutes nearly all of the fragments we possess. In her address, the goddess explains that there are two routes of inquiry, διζήσιος (*dizesios*), of truth and opinion:

> χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
> ἠμὲν ἀληθείης εὐπειθέος ἀτρεκὲς[20] ἦτορ
> ἠδὲ βροτῶν Δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής.
>
> (DK 28 B 1.28–30)

> "You must learn everything,
> the exact heart of convincing truth
> and the suppositions of mortals, in which there is no true credence."

She then develops this theme of avenues of inquiry through an extended metaphor of travel.[21] The first path she refers to as "is." The goddess identifies it as the "exact heart of persuasive truth" and throughout the poem uses what had been the rare, marked form found in Homer, ἀλήθεια (*aletheia*).[22] This usage either anticipates or agrees with the increasing rarity of other Homeric terms for truth in the fifth century.[23] The second

328–36, on the implications of reading Parmenides as responding to Xenophanes, with bibliography at 124 n. 1.

[20] N.b. ἀτρεκές: Simplicius gives the variant εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμές instead of εὐπειθέος ἀτρεκές; Proclus, εὐφεγγέος ἀτρεμές; see Kurfess (2014), for the controversy.

[21] On the quest for knowledge: DK 28 B 1.28; B 8.16–19; B 8.50–2; for inquiry in Parmenides, see B 2.2; B 6.3; B 7.2; B 8.6.

[22] In the epic tradition, ἐτεός, ἔτυμος, ἐτήτυμος, ἀληθής, ἀληθείη, ἀτρεκής, ἀτρεκέως, νημερτέως, and νημερτής all refer to what is real, true, or genuine. Above all, the synonyms ἐτεός, ἔτυμος, ἐτήτυμος predominate. Levet (1976), 32, shows they account for 50% of truth-terms in the *Iliad* and 26.5% in the *Odyssey*. According to Chantraine, the etymology arises from εἰμί (the ancient interpretation) or ἐτάζω. A different family of words has, however, monopolized discussion of epic truth-terms: ἀληθής/ἀλήθεια. These are the rarest terms for truth in Homer: in the *Iliad* 11%; *Odyssey* 15.5%. Levet (1976), 33, contrasts Herodotus, who is at 60.5%, a relatively low percentage in comparison with Sophocles (85%), Euripides (75.5%), and Aristophanes (79%). As to their meaning, Heidegger's etymological reading remains influential, deriving *aletheia* from *leth-/lanthano*, where α-λήθη is read as "not-forgetting," a relation that puts truth next to memory in contradistinction to oblivion. For more recent scholarship, see the authoritative research of Cole (1983), 8, "*alētheia* is that which is involved in, or results from, a transmission of information that excludes *lēthē*, whether in the form of forgetfulness, failure to notice, or ignoring." For discussions on truth vocabulary in Homer, see Luther (1935); Boeder (1959); Detienne (1960); Heitsch (1962); Krischer (1965); Starr (1968); Adkins (1972); Kahn (1973), 363–6; Levet (1976); and Cole (1983). For *aletheia* and Parmenides' philosophical program, see above all Cherubin (2009). Mourelatos (2008), 63, holds that truth in philosophy moves from Homer's truth (bare facts), to a conception of truth as genuine, real, and authentic. See too Curd (1998), 25–7, 178; Papadis (2005).

[23] Just once does Parmenides use the Homeric ἐτήτυμος, at DK 28 B 8.18; in this respect, Parmenides presages the fourth-century eclipse of the multiplicity of truth terms in archaic *epos* in favor of *aletheia*. Neologisms balance their decline, as is evident in Heraclitus' dictum at DK 22 B 133, noted above, or in Democritus at DK 68 B 225, ἀληθομυθέειν χρεών, οὐ πολυλογέειν ("one must speak truth, not prattle on"). Democritus is an exception, as he does use ἐτεός, though generally in

route is that of "the opinions of mortals." This comprises forty extant lines of sophisticated theory on cosmology, astronomy, theology, sensation, biology, and embryology. The goddess stresses the importance of the two paths of inquiry several times in the poem and continuously connects the former with truth. As in Xenophanes, questions of epistemology in relation to inquiry come to the fore for Parmenides' divine mouthpiece. Yet it is crucial not to gloss over the fact that the Youth must learn *doxa* as well: "all the same, you will also learn these things, how opinions | would have to be acceptable always traversing everything." (B 1.54–5). However we interpret the relationship between the two sections of the poem, the *Way of Truth* and the *Doxa* – and this remains one of the most hotly contested questions in Presocratic philosophy[24] – *On Nature* does appear to achieve its objective of instructing the Youth in both fields of inquiry: truth and seeming. Parmenides' proffering of seeming and being as avenues of philosophical inquiry will have a long legacy.

Among fifth-century philosophers, epistemology and reservations on the ability to attain truth remain a fixture of the discourse.[25] Empedocles

order to argue that it is an impossible standard for human perception, cf. DK 68 B 6; B 7; B 9; B 10. However, at B 125 he asserts the positive attributes of reality as ἐτεῇ δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν, "in reality atom and void." Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 1.214 clarifies: ὁ Δημόκριτος λέγῃ "ἐτεῇ δὲ ἄτομα καὶ κενόν." "ἐτεῇ' μὲν γὰρ λέγει ἀντὶ τοῦ 'ἀληθείᾳ" ("Democritus says 'in reality atoms and void.' He says 'reality' instead of 'truth'"); cf. too, 68 A 49. At B 117 ἀλήθεια and ἐτεός appear synonymous as a standard out of human reach.

[24] On the problematic epistemological stance of the *Doxa* in relation to the *Aletheia*, KRS 262 is succinct: "Why [Parmenides' cosmology] was included in the poem remains a mystery: the goddess seeks to save the phenomena so far as is possible, but she knows and tells us that the project is impossible." For a less aporetic discussion, the classic treatment is Guthrie (1965), 50–7, who argues for deep cleavage between the *Way of Truth* and *Seeming*. Owen (1960), 54, equally famously, holds that its inclusion serves as a "dialectical" effort on the part of the author and brings the reader to the closest possible approximation of truth that can be achieved with such evidence. Hussey (1990), argues against Guthrie. Curd (1998), 104–10, similarly relegates deceptive dualistic astronomical and embryological assertions to the realm of supposition rather than truth. Cosgrove (2014), generally favors Guthrie's interpretation. Tor (2017), 163–221, argues that Doxastic things can be construed correctly and incorrectly by mortals, who must think in these terms, although Doxastic things should not be mistaken for approaching reality, i.e., what-is. Cherubin (2017), holds that the *Way of Truth* makes use of language and concepts in the *Doxa*, a fact that throws doubt on the status of each path of inquiry. Meanwhile, Rossetti (2017), posits that Parmenides is a polymath whose philosophy of nature is as true as his philosophy of being, even if they are not compatible. Alternatively, Sattler (2020), 119–23, maintains that Parmenides' cosmology is simply a "resource for being sceptical" about other cosmologies (120), not a reflection of what-is in any way.

[25] Parmenides' successors continued to be preoccupied with the status of truth: Protagoras is said to have written an Ἀλήθεια and Antiphon a περὶ τῆς Ἀληθείας. The prominence of weak skepticism is acknowledged as a feature of this period by later skeptics, e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 1.44, where Socrates allegedly admitted the difficulty of reaching truth along with Democritus, Anaxagoras, and Empedocles. Cf. Diog. Laert. 9.66.

speaks of the "narrow resources diffused through the limbs" that hinder human cognition (DK 31 B 2).[26] The diminution of the senses as a route to truth is also present in Anaxagoras, who treated them as insufficient due to their "feebleness": ὑπ' ἀφαυρότητος αὐτῶν οὐ δυνατοί ἐσμεν κρίνειν τἀληθές (DK 59 B 21) and instead offered *logos* as the criterion.[27] In the fragments of Democritus, the fraught relationship of truth to perception is highlighted repeatedly, as in, for example, "although it will be clear that in truth to know what sort of thing each thing is is intractable" (DK 68 B 8: καίτοι δῆλον ἔσται, ὅτι ἐτεῇ οἷον ἕκαστον γιγνώσκειν ἐν ἀπόρῳ ἐστί). His language innovates in returning to the epic term for truth, ἐτεός (*eteos*), but is otherwise remarkably consistent with the general reluctance of earlier philosophy to underwrite truth claims via sense perception.[28]

From this brief sketch of the evidence on the explicit reflections of Presocratic philosophy on epistemology, it should be clear that access to truth was of serious philosophical interest in the period and seriously challenged. Challenging the conditions for truth posed questions of the natural world and the conclusions able to be drawn from it. This negative and positive project of philosophical inquiry will be valuable for contextualizing Herodotus' voiceprint in the *Histories*.

Problematizing Truth Claims in the *Histories*

The *Histories* has been censured as arbitrary in its preference for "truth" in select passages and what is "probable" or even simply what is "said" in others.[29] In the context of Presocratic debates on verification and its complications, such equivocal claims become more intelligible. Problematizing truth claims often occurs in the *Histories* in the use of conditional statements: in speaking of the Phoenicians' actions toward the priestesses, the narrator conjectures "if truly (εἰ ἀληθέως) the Phoenicians sold these women, one to Libya, one to Greece" (2.56.1), then one would

[26] DK 31 B 2.5–9, for Empedocles' comments on the difficulty of acquiring knowledge. He is more optimistic at B 3.9–13; B 4; B 110.1–5.

[27] For Anaxagoras' response to Parmenides' challenge, see Kahn (1989); Furth (1991); Sisko (2003); Palmer (2009), 225–59.

[28] For Democritus' epistemology, see Lee (2005), 181–250.

[29] E.g., Lateiner (1989), 57, "His modes of determining historical truth and of distinguishing the knowable from the probable, the improbable, and the demonstrably false, and his techniques for separating deceptive and self-justifying statements from objective ones are pre-formal, in that no theorist of historiography preceded him and provided rules." And again at, 245 n. 1, "Herodotus clearly was no formal epistemologist." For a critique of Herodotus as capricious, see Moles (1993), 95.

have landed among the Thesprotians in Greece. In his discussion of the floating island of Chemmis, Herodotus does not reject the marvel out of hand, but expresses wonder if it is true (2.156.2). Similarly, he carefully qualifies the story of the Ethiopian spring with water smelling of violets, leaving a glistening oil on those who bathe in it, unable to support anything floating in it: "If it is truly what it is said to be" (3.23.3), then Herodotus speculates that it would have to be the cause of the uniquely long lives enjoyed by the Ethiopians. The Alcmaeonids freed Athens – but a note of uncertainty is sounded since they did so *if* the men bribing Delphi were indeed Alcmaeonids (6.123.2). This refrain of the provisional nature of conclusions that can be derived from the past highlights, as Presocratic thinkers did, the difficulty of achieving certainty in human inquiry.[30]

The standard for *historie* is often "truth," but the *Histories* frequently uses the term ἀτρεκής (*atrekes*), meaning "strict" or "precise."[31] As we saw above, in Parmenides it seems to have been connected to ἀλήθεια. On rare occasions, Herodotus affirms something positive with ἀτρεκέως, as in his discussion of the ethnography of the Persians, which is, significantly, divided between the narrator's own knowledge and hearsay (1.140.1–2), and in his guarantee of Greek knowledge of Egyptian history after the settlement of Greeks in Egypt by Psammetichus (2.154.4). Much more regularly, however, it reveals the limits of the narrator's knowledge with the phrase, οὐκ ἔχω ἀτρεκέως εἰπεῖν ("I am unable to say precisely").[32] At times, the lack of narratorial understanding widens into an expression of the limits of contemporary human knowledge: "the region to the east of the Bald Men is known accurately, as it is inhabited by the Issedonians, however, that which is to the north is not known . . . unless we refer to the things said about them" (4.25.2).

Likelihood also plays a role in thinking about truth – as well as falsehood – in the *Histories*. In the description of Kyrauis, an island whose mud is said to produce gold-dust when surveyed with feathers smeared with pitch, Herodotus is ambivalent about the marvel, stating that he

[30] Cf. Xenophanes' statements on his old age and travels throughout Greece at DK 21 B 8, which are qualified with the reserved conditional "if I know to speak truly about these things" (εἴπερ ἐγὼ περὶ τῶνδ' οἶδα λέγειν ἐτύμως).

[31] By way of comparison, Thucydides uses *akribeia*, "precision" or "accuracy." See Thomas (2017), 575–6, for a view on its connection with the Hippocratic medical tradition.

[32] DK 68 B 9: ἡμεῖς δὲ τῷ μὲν ἐόντι οὐδὲν ἀτρεκὲς συνίεμεν ("Truly we grasp nothing exact"). Cf. Diog. Ap. DK 64 B 5.17. The formula οὐκ ἔχω ἀτρεκέως is very common: 1.172.1; 2.103.2; 2.167.1; 3.115.1; 3.116.1; 4.81.1; 4.187.2; 4.187.3; 7.54.3; 7.152.1; 8.87.1; 9.18.2; 9.84.2. He uses "no one knows exactly" (οὐδεὶς οἶδε ἀτρεκέως) for universal uncertainty, 4.16.1; 4.25.1.

writes what he has heard. Still, he adds an analogous experience in which he says he has seen a myrtle branch affixed to a pole draw up pitch from a pool of water. This leads to the inference, "So the story that comes from the island that lies off Libya seems alike to the truth" (4.195.4: οὕτω ὦν καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς νήσου τῆς ἐπὶ Λιβύῃ κειμένης οἰκότα ἐστὶ ἀληθείῃ). This readily conjures up the fallibilism of Xenophanes, for whom things should be supposed as "alike to true" (ἐοικότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι), given the provisional nature of human wisdom. For Herodotus, analogical reasoning is a powerful means for approaching – if not arriving at – epistemic certainty.[33] As for Xenophanes, approximating the truth suggests a value to οἰκότα in the work that *historie* is doing. Herodotus' expression of qualified conviction accepts that what is likely is significant to human understanding, not simply what is true. This finds confirmation in another marvel, on the alleged relay of offerings from the land of the Hyperboreans to the island of Delos. The Hyperboreans bring offerings tied in wheat straw to the borders of their territory with the Scythians, who convey them to their neighbors, and so they make their way to the Adriatic Sea and southward to Dodona, and then Euboea, and Tinos, before they arrive at their destination in Delos. This improbable transfer finds tepid verification, as Herodotus relates, "by myself I know a thing done similar to these offerings" (4.33.5: οἶδα δὲ αὐτὸς τούτοισι τοῖσι ἱροῖσι τόδε ποιεύμενον προσφερές), namely, that Thracian and Paionian female worshippers of Artemis the Queen also make their offerings with wheat straw.[34] He continues by insisting that he "knows" (οἶδα) these women make their offerings this way.

In his fragment on likelihood and truth, Xenophanes himself was reworking the Homeric and Hesiodic formulation according to which lies can be spoken like the truth. In the *Odyssey*, for example, the trickster figure Odysseus "spoke many lies alike to the truth" (*Od.* 19.203: ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα). In the *Theogony*, the Muses say "we know how to speak many falsehoods like the truth, and we know, again, when we wish, how to speak the truth" (*Theog.* 27–8: ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα | ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ'ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι). Herodotus playfully alludes to these passages in the context of another trickster, the Scionian diver, Scyllias. After enriching himself among the Persians, Scyllias defects to the Greeks, although how he does so elicits the guarded reservation that "I cannot say exactly, but I marvel if

[33] For analogical reasoning, see Lloyd (1966).
[34] See Smyth 1209a, for emphatic αὐτός as "by myself" or "unaided."

what is said is true" (8.8.2: οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν ἀτρεκέως, θωμάζω δὲ εἰ τὰ λεγόμενα ἐστὶ ἀληθέα).[35] He continues by explaining that recounting episodes from the life of this Scyllias demands great care because "now there are some things about this man that are very like lies, and others that are true" (8.8.3: λέγεται μέν νυν καὶ ἄλλα ψευδέσι ἴκελα περὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τούτου, τὰ δὲ μετεξέτερα ἀληθέα). Here, the allusion to the *Theogony* is activated, as the opposition between narrative approximations of truth and falsehood is maintained. In the *Theogony*, these lines are often construed as highlighting the Muses' creative control over their source material and its reception. The narratives on Scyllias by contrast flag the way in which inquiry requires human distinguishing between truth and falsehood, even if this is always an ongoing negotiation. Moreover, Herodotus reworks an important element of the Hesiodic Muses' proclamation in his statement that stories about Scyllias are "alike to lies" rather than the Hesiodic "lies alike to truth." This formulation gestures toward the complexity of truth, which can be deformed into appearing akin to falsehood. That is, impressions of falsehood must be carefully processed given the protean nature of truth. This represents a variation on Xenophanes, for whom truth in the mortal sphere is always uncertain.[36] As these passages indicate, the *Histories*' awareness of the value of likelihood to historical inquiry operates within a Presocratic sphere of discussion on epistemology.[37]

The eyes and the ears have been prominent in scholarly discussion of the empiricism associated with early Greek *historie*.[38] Herodotus is willing to admit the senses as viable routes to knowledge with greater regularity than some Presocratic thinkers.[39] However, his use of "eyesight" and "hearing" are usually coded to second-hand testimony and first-hand autopsy, rather than a simple ranking of sensory organs. With this restricted

[35] Thomas (2018) well treats the inclusion of false stories in Herodotus as a deflation of their heroic mythicization.

[36] Hdt. 1.192.4, for the ignorance of the narratee as a motivation not to report the exact truth. For an alternative, but not incompatible position, see Darbo-Peschanksi (1987), 164–89.

[37] Cf. the very self-conscious presentation in Hecataeus' proem, where he affirms his own *opinion* of the truth, *FGrH* 1 F 1a: τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι. ("I write these things as they seem to me to be true.") Fowler (2006), 98, connects Herodotus to Hecataeus, "Like Herodotus after him (but not, say, Herodotus' contemporary, Protagoras), Hecataeus considered truth a monistic concept, and probability an absolute criterion." But it is clear that the ethnographer could be read alongside philosophical bards such as Xenophanes – see DK 22 B 40, where Heraclitus links the two. The apparently shared background of "anti-traditionalism" has suggested to some that Xenophanes was instrumental in the rationalizing tendencies of Hecataeus, cf. Bertelli (2001), 94.

[38] Darbo-Peschanski (1987), 84–101; Hartog (1988), 260–73. See Hdt. 2.99.1.

[39] For Herodotus and sense perception, see Müller (1981) and pp. 2–3, 6–8, 9–10.

meaning in mind, the *Histories* does treat the senses as susceptible to deception. Reservations on hearsay go back to the Gyges and Candaules episode, when the Lydian ruler extends the invitation to see his wife naked, with "the ears are less trustworthy than the eyes" (1.8.2). This does not entail, of course, that the eyes are reliable. They are only *more* so than hearsay. The diminution of hearsay is echoed by the narrator in the context of the quality of the knowledge concerning the land beyond the Issedonians, which Aristeas even only knew of by hearsay. Herodotus continues by qualifying, "So much as we were able to reach certainty[40] by hearsay, as far as is possible, all has been said" (4.16.2). On the labyrinth in Egypt above the lake Moeris, he explains, "So I speak about the rooms below taking what I know from hearsay (ἀκοῇ), but the upper area that is greater than human deeds, I saw myself" (2.148.6: αὐτοὶ ὡρῶμεν). Hearsay arising from the Egyptians on the life of Rhampsinitus earns a special disclaimer: "Now about the things said by the Egyptians, to whomever these things are credible, let him use them (λεγομένοισι χράσθω ὅτεῳ τὰ τοιαῦτα πιθανά ἐστι). It is my fixed rule through the entire narrative that I write what has been said by each individual, by hearsay" (2.123.1).

Compare, for example, his treatment with Homer's exchange between Aeneas and Achilles: "we know one another's family, we know one another's parents, having heard the stories of mortal men spoken of former times" (*Il.* 20.203–4: ἴδμεν δ' ἀλλήλων γενεήν, ἴδμεν δὲ τοκῆας | πρόκλυτ' ἀκούοντες ἔπεα θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων).[41] In Homer, hearsay and the general agreement of men can underwrite knowledge. Herodotus' treatment of *akoe* is more circumspect and offers only the possibility of oral reports' truthfulness. His intrusions qualifying truth claims become part of the narrative contract and cultivate a skeptical audience.[42] They are also markers of authority, as one is exposed to the "problem of sources," as Robert Fowler memorably phrased it, and thus, the problem of reporting truthfully.[43] In this way, Herodotus is able to proclaim his own prowess in

[40] Wilson (2015), 74, omits ἀτρεκέως because it appears earlier in the passage. I reject this reading on the grounds that Hdt. does repeat this term, e.g., 1.140.1 and 1.140.2, 3.115.1 and 3.116.1, 4.187.2 and 4.187.3.

[41] See also Hom. *Od.* 11.363–7. According to Hussey (1990), 17, skepticism occurs in Homer when discussing: (1) the remote past including the heroic age; (2) the distant future; (3) secrets of Fate and the plans of the gods.

[42] Dewald (1987), 167. Cf. Marincola (1997), 7, for the intrusive Herodotean narrator.

[43] Fowler (1996), 86.

handling his sources, in contrast with his more credulous or ill-informed peers.

The Obligation to Truth and What-Is

The rarity of the instances in which the narrator confirms a *logos* as reliable must be contextualized as linked to the high standard maintained for truth claims amid Herodotus' philosophical contemporaries. Focusing solely upon Herodotus' reticence in making truth claims, however, neglects the select instances in which the *Histories* instead endorses an account or detail as true. As we saw above, *sophoi* display an obligation to seeming *and* truth.

Autopsy is often connected to ἀλήθεια, σαφής, and in select cases, ἀτρεκέως.[44] When Herodotus desires to know "something clear" (σαφές τι) about Heracles' genealogy, he is satisfied after traveling to Tyre and Thasos: "What I have learned shows clearly that Heracles is an ancient divinity" (2.44.5: τὰ μέν νυν ἱστορημένα δηλοῖ σαφέως παλαιὸν θεὸν Ἡρακλέα ἐόντα). Similarly, he affirms that the pillars he saw in Ionia were of Sesostris, rather than Memnon as some conjectured (εἰκάζουσί); in this "they were far from the truth" (2.106.5: τῆς ἀληθείης ἀπολελειμμένοι). In both cases, autopsy lends itself to verified knowledge. The expectation of reporting truthfully as an eyewitness is reinforced by a metanarrative passage in which Darius believes that his court ethnographer, Scylax of Caryanda, will relate his findings on India *truthfully* (4.44.1), which directs the expectations of Herodotus' audience to his similar ideal in composing ethnography.[45]

Truth may be accessible beyond autopsy through counterfactual reasoning.[46] The claim that receives the most attention is Herodotus' provocative affirmation that the Athenians were in truth responsible for the Greek victory during the Greco-Persian Wars. This is maintained not on the basis of Herodotus' sight but through a series of counterfactual historical hypotheticals: "Here by necessity (ἀναγκαίῃ) I am constrained to

[44] However, sight is commonly associated in the *Histories* not with vision but with dreams. Decoding this "sight" is notoriously difficult. Powell s.v. ὄψις, which occurs 79 times in the text; 46 of those instances are in reference to dreams, many of which are riddling, e.g. 1.38.2; 1.39.1; 1.107.2; 1.108.1–2; 1.120.1; 1.209–10; 2.139.2; 2.141.3; 3.65.4; 3.124; 5.56.2; 6.107–8; 7.12; 7.15; 7.18–19.

[45] Alternatively, Montiglio (2005), 143–4, makes a case for Herodotus' conception of truth as a literal report or catalog, on the model of Homeric epic.

[46] For explicit truth claims and narratorial certainty, see Hdt. 1.14.2; 1.95; 1.116.5; 1.140; 2.44; 2.154.4; 3.80.1; 4.152.3; 5.54.1; 5.88.1; 6.37.2; 6.43.3; 6.50.3; 6.124.2; 7.139.5; 7.214.3; 9.11.3. See Appendix 3 for additional discussion of this subject.

offer an opinion that will provoke resentment (ἐπίφθονον) among most people, but one that, nevertheless, appears to me to be true (μοι φαίνεται εἶναι ἀληθὲς), and I will not hold back" (7.139.1). In ring composition, the narrator reinforces this, stating that, "Now if someone were to say that the Athenians became the deliverers of Greece he would not miss the mark of the truth (τἀληθέος)" (7.139.5).[47] The repeated declarations emphasize his serious commitment to the controversial claim.

The structure of the argument is often passed over, but it is meaningful, as it echoes that of forensic oratory.[48] There are parallels with, for example, Gorgias' *Palamedes*. In this defense speech, Palamedes forestalls the invidiousness associated with self-praise by expressly handling the delicate subject:

> I therefore request of you that, if I remind you of the things done well by me in some way, no one resent my words (μηδένα φθονῆσαι τοῖς λεγομένοις), but consider that one who faces terrible and false accusations must (ἀναγκαῖον) also tell you, knowledgeable as you are, something of his true good acts (τῶν ἀληθῶν ἀγαθῶν). (DK 82 B 11a.28)

What precedes this claim is similar:

> Judges, I wish to say something to you about myself that may cause resentment, but that is true (ἐπίφθονον μὲν ἀληθὲς δέ), which would not be suitable for one who is not a defendant, but which is appropriate for one who is a defendant. (B 11a.28)

Herodotus' language situates his claims about Athens in the agonistic climate of the defendant on trial, which reinforces the contentiousness of his assertions. Countless scholars have commented upon this passage and registered its importance in the narrative of the causal chain leading to the defeat of the Persians during the war, and its stress on truth should tell against the notion of a narrator ambivalent concerning truth claims.[49]

[47] On this passage, see Kleinknecht (1940), who interpreted Herodotus' argumentation as arising from an Ionian philosophical and medical milieu. See also Evans (1979). Demand (1987), 746, is on the right track, barring the view of Herodotus as a "layman": "It should therefore offer us valuable insight into the way in which development in causal argument by professionals (sophists, natural scientists, and doctors) were adapted and used by an intelligent and informed 'layman.'"

[48] As noted by Demand (1987), 755–8. Analogous is Herodotus' insistence on the truth of the Constitutional Debate, 3.80.1; confirmed at 6.43.3, where again, logical inference has a strong hold on truth claims.

[49] For political readings, see Immerwahr (1966), 216–18; Fornara (1971), 45–58, 80–1; Lateiner (1989), 95–6; Marincola (1997), 173, examines the rhetoric of truth as a means of legitimating a historian's praise; and Baragwanath (2008), 227–31, thoughtfully treats it in the context of shifting motives. It seems to me that the brief statement in Thomas (2000), 190, that, "he attempts to

The ideal standard is truth, though it is a subjective one, μοι φαίνεται εἶναι ἀληθὲς ("it seems to me to be true"), with the infinitive following φαίνεται stressing the qualified nature of the proposition's truth content.[50] The conclusion, in which Herodotus presents another counterfactual with a hypothetical proponent of the view that the Athenians were Greece's saviors, includes the apodosis "he would not miss the mark" (οὐκ ἂν ἁμαρτάνοι) of the truth. Here too, the rhetoric of truth is cautious, as Herodotus attempts to win over an audience resistant to the argument in defense of Athens' role.

A key innovation in the discussion of truth is Parmenides' elevation of the participle of the verb "to be," *eon*, "what-is," as an avenue for epistemological discussion.[51] The first part of the goddess' revelation in the treatise is fixed squarely on *eon*. Its meaning as either an absolute "what-is" or a complement in the sense of "what is x" continues to inspire fierce debate in modern scholarship.[52] The goddess explicitly rejects the consideration of τό γε μὴ ἐόν (B 2.7); she avers that τὸ ἐόν cannot be cut from holding onto τὸ ἐόν (B 4); what-is (ἐόν) is ungenerated, indestructible, complete, single-born, stable, without end (B 8). This discussion as a whole constitutes "thought about truth" (B 8.50–1: νόημα | ἀμφὶς ἀληθείης), as opposed to opinion.

The effect of Parmenides' *On Nature* on subsequent debates on human knowledge cannot be underestimated. Melissus of Samos, for example, presented himself as an inheritor of the tradition of Parmenides. He exemplifies the continuing investigation into "to be" and its relation to epistemic claims:[53]

justify an unpopular view that the Athenians did the most to defeat the Persians," proceeding by "logical argument" and "likelihood" is correct, though it does not situate this in terms of a wider rhetoric of truth claims in the *Histories*.

[50] Herodotus states that he is reporting a variant several times in the *Histories*, 2.123.1; 3.9.2; 7.152.3, and closely distinguishes this from narratorial endorsement. Thomas (2000), 214, is compelling in her statement that "it is clear that the principle of 'saying what has been said' is very far from all that Herodotus is interested in, when it comes to other people's views."

[51] Most scholars now agree that Parmenides' use of the verb involves a mixture of the existential and predicative senses of εἶναι. This is also the case for Homer, e.g., Folit-Weinberg (2022), 172–3, 181–2. Earlier, it was interpreted as the so-called veridical εἰμί in particular by Kahn (1966), (1969), (1973). He argues, to my view unpersuasively, that this usage is evident as far back as Homer, stating facts, propositions, or statements to be "true" or such as "is the case," e.g., Hom. *Il.* 24.373: οὕτω πῃ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ φίλον τέκος ὡς ἀγορεύεις. These observations are modified for Parmenides by Brown (1994); Curd (1998); and Mourelatos (2008). Benardete (1977) and Matthen (1983) reject Kahn's arguments for Parmenides. See Warren (2007), 16–19, 104, for the broad dissemination of Parmenides in the fifth century; cf. Palmer (1999), for the influence of Parmenides into the fourth century.

[52] Gallop (1984), 42.

[53] See also Anaxagoras at DK 59 B 3.

> Well then, it is clear that we were not seeing correctly and that those things do not correctly seem to be many (ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἑωρῶμεν οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνα πολλὰ ὀρθῶς δοκεῖ εἶναι); for they would not change if they were true (εἰ ἀληθῆ ἦν), but each one would be exactly as it seemed to be. For nothing is stronger than what truly is (τοῦ . . . ἐόντος ἀληθινοῦ). (DK 30 B 8.5)

Evidently, Melissus is grappling with the first part of Parmenides' treatise. His judgment in this fragment suggests that the phenomenal world represents a multiplicity that is itself not fixed, but changes, and, therefore, fails to meet the conditions of "what-is." For Melissus, humans incorrectly identify true what-is with objects of impermanence.

This relation of truth and what-is came to still greater prominence. The so-called veridical use of the verb "to be" as "true" is found in fifth-century Hippocratic literature, the dramas of Aristophanes and Euripides, and Thucydides' *History*.[54] The concepts became entangled enough that by the fourth century one of the ways in which Aristotle could define the verb "to be" was as indicating what is true (*Metaph*. Δ 7, 1017a31). Herodotus too uses veridical εἰμί in its neuter participle form. According to J. E. Powell, Herodotus uses τὸ ἐόν on fifteen occasions with the meaning "truth."[55] This is significant; he makes use of this veridical meaning more than any other extant author.[56] Given the term's prominence in philosophical debates on the proper subject of inquiry and the underlying nature of reality, Herodotus' handling merits examination.

The use of τὸ ἐόν as truth is present in the programmatic dialogue between Solon and Croesus at the start of the *Histories*.[57] The Lydian court at Sardis evokes the intellectual climate of fifth-century Athens, attracting as it does all of the leading philosophers of Greece. Croesus' imminent fall is prefaced by a virtuoso monologue on human happiness by the Athenian lover-of-wisdom (φιλοσοφέων), Solon. Important for our purposes is the interpretative frame that the narrator provides for this monologue:

[54] Hippoc. *Morb. Sacr*. 20: αἱ δὲ φρένες ἄλλως ὄνομα ἔχουσι τῇ τύχῃ κεκτημένον καὶ τῷ νόμῳ, τῷ δ' ἐόντι οὔκ, οὐδὲ τῇ φύσει ("The diaphragm simply has a name that is acquired by chance and convention, but not in truth nor by nature"); cf. Ar. *Nub*. 86; Ar. *Ran*. 1052, Eur. *El*. 346. The frozen adverbial forms in the dative become commonplace in Attic prose: cf. Th. 4.28.2; 8.92.11. A potentially early philosophical usage may be in Protagoras' *The Overthrowing Arguments*, or *Truth*, see Pl. *Tht*. 152a2–4 = DK 80 B 1. It is also found in Pl. *Crat*. 385b.

[55] In fact, there are fourteen instances of veridical εἰμί in the *Histories*. These are best translated as "true," "true reality," "what-is" – and are all absolute or attributive participles. See Powell s.v. τὸ ἐόν, "the truth," though he neglects ἐόντως, 7.143.6. In every case it is connected with *logos*, or language, with the exception of 7.209.1, where intellection is concerned rather than speech. Cf. the preference for the substantive participial use in Parmenides, e.g. DK 28 B 2.7, 4.2, 8.7, 8.12.

[56] Kahn (1973), 352.

[57] For a discussion of this passage, see pp. 1–5.

> "So now a desire has come over me to ask you whether there is some individual you have seen who is the most fortunate of all." He asked these things, expecting to be the most blessed of men. But Solon, not flattering him at all but using the truth (τῷ ἐόντι χρησάμενος), says . . .. (1.30.2–3)

This question sets in motion Solon's positive account of well-being through two historical exempla and a series of ethical reflections on the condition of man. Solon's truth-to-power approach solidifies his position as "wise advisor" and has the effect of frustrating the Lydian king with its frank rejection of his aspirations. The guarantee of Solon's content as drawing upon "what-is" or, better, "truth" (τῷ ἐόντι) is seldom noted.[58] This may be implicitly focalized by Solon or an authorial comment; in either case, it is contrasted with the flattering and deceptive language of those who often populate dynastic courts in the *Histories*.[59] Croesus' status as absolute ruler endangers truth, but Solon rebuffs the seal of approval that the king seeks. The reference to Solon as a "lover of wisdom" corroborates the narratorial guarantee of his discourse as true, as it drives home the authority of the Athenian sage's response.

Given the association of τὸ ἐόν with a philosophical register, an innovation of the *Histories* is its applying it to the speech of a mortal philosopher, rather than a divinity as in Parmenides. He also departs from the preceding intellectual milieu in using τὸ ἐόν in reference to questions of human flourishing. Instead of evoking any specific philosopher, the language underwrites historiography's efficacy in enunciating universal moral truths much as philosophers aimed to do. But in tying Solon's words on the human condition of life as characterized by peaks and valleys, the unchanging nature of τὸ ἐόν is reconceived.[60]

The narrator redeploys this locution at the close of the Croesus-*logos* and the start of Cyrus' biography. Herodotus announces this new trajectory with the words:[61]

> ἐπιδίζηται δὲ δὴ τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος τόν τε Κῦρον ὅστις ἐὼν τὴν Κροίσου ἀρχὴν κατεῖλε, καὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ὅτεῳ τρόπῳ ἡγήσαντο τῆς

[58] Stein 1.30: "τὸ ἐὸν 'die Wahrheit'"; Sheets (1993), 1.30, simply translates it "truth"; How-Wells and Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella neglect it entirely. A potential contemporary philosophical model for Herodotus may be Anaxagoras, cf. DK 59 A 30, as discussed at pp. 3–4.

[59] The emphasis of Pelling (2006), 152, is different but not incompatible with my own, "Solon's type of argument is expressively roundabout. He warns Croesus of the dangers, but very tactfully."

[60] For a Heraclitean interpretation of Herodotus' rise and fall schema, see Nestle (1908), 9; A. Lloyd (1990); as noted in Thomas (2000), 17.

[61] On the structure of 1.95 as a second proem, see Lateiner (1989), 40. It is in this passage that the narrative begins to track Persian expansion, which will be the overarching path for the rest of the *Histories*.

> Ἀσίης. ὡς ὧν Περσέων μετεξέτεροι λέγουσι, οἱ μὴ βουλόμενοι σεμνοῦν τὰ περὶ Κῦρον ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐόντα λέγειν λόγον, κατὰ ταῦτα γράψω, ἐπιστάμενος περὶ Κύρου καὶ τριφασίας ἄλλας λόγων ὁδοὺς φῆναι. (1.95.1)
>
> From here on out our narrative goes on to inquire into Cyrus, who he was who destroyed the empire of Croesus, and into the Persians, in what manner they ruled over Asia. I will write in accordance with these things what some of the Persians relate, those not willing to exalt the circumstances surrounding Cyrus, but who wish to say the true story, although I know three other paths of stories to disclose.

From the start of the *Histories*, Herodotus described his narrative progression using the language of spatial metaphors. In this passage too, in what might be considered a second proem, he returns to the spatial metaphor and broadens it, using the language of the "path of *logos*" in order to explain the *Histories*' shift from its first major *logos* into its second.[62]

It is worth observing the kind of grammar of truth the narrator appeals to in crafting the forward momentum of the text. In fact, the pronouncement stands out as distinctive; Herodotus seldom vouches for the intentions of his interlocutors.[63] Yet here, he notes that his oral sources are those willing to speak the true *logos* rather than to exalt (σεμνοῦν) Cyrus' history. This is comparable to Solon's unwillingness to flatter the Lydian ruler. Rejecting those wishing to deform Cyrus' life leads the narrator to follow those speaking the "true" or "real" *logos*.[64] In this case, the term underwrites the correspondence of historical inquiry to reality, shoring the Cyrus *logos* up against objections of fabrication.

The engagement may even be more targeted. Several elements within the passage evoke Parmenides: first, the verb of inquiring, ἐπιδίζημαι

[62] E.g., 1.5.3 προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου. ὁμοίως σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών. Cf. also 1.11.2; 1.117.2; 2.20.1; 2.115.3. For the "hodological" nature of narrative, see Becker (1937); on the imagery in Homer and Pindar, see Ford (1992), 41–9. On Herodotus, see Dewald (1987), 149, 166; Payen (1997), 334–8; Nagy (1990), 236–7, who aligns Herodotus with Odysseus; Hartog (2001), 346–54; Montiglio (2005), 136–9; Purves (2010), 123, 145–8, who also connects Herodotus to Odysseus; and lately, Wood (2016); Barker (2021). For road imagery in Parmenides, see now Folit-Weinberg (2022). "Wandering" is associated with falsehood or *aporia*, see Hdt. 2.115.3; 6.37.2. Cf. the wandering of Parmenides' two-headed humans and wandering more broadly, DK 28 B 6.5–6, 8.28, 8.54, 10.4, 14, 16.1.

[63] Though see 3.2 and 3.16.5–7. This passage speaks against Verdin (1971), 228, "Nowhere does [Herodotus] appear to have linked the genuineness of his evidence directly to its authority." The fabrications remain, importantly, paths of inquiry – a fact that fits with the narratorial penchant to "say what has been said." On the sources of it, see Immerwahr (1966), 162 n. 35; Murray (2001), 38.

[64] As noted above at p. 167, the *Histories* begins purposefully as well, 1.5.3. Lateiner (1989), 60, finds that Herodotus withholds information three times: in this passage, in 1.177, and 1.214.5. On his method of including and excluding variants, see Immerwahr (1966), 55–6; Lateiner (1989), 76–90.

(*epidizemai*), is closely associated with the regular term of Presocratic "inquiry," δίζησις (*dizesis*). This noun and its verbal forms are prominent in Parmenides' *On Nature*, and the Elean philosopher apparently coined the prior.[65] Intriguingly, it is more frequent in the *Histories* than ἱστορέω (*historeo*), the verb with which Herodotus' inquiry is more readily associated.[66] Next, those individuals willing to speak τὸν ἐοντα λόγον are transmitted, with a hodological metaphor of roads of narrative-not-taken concluding the passage. These words recall the message of Parmenides' goddess (DK 28 B 2.2), who informs her audience of the "only roads of inquiry" (ὁδοὶ μοῦναι διζήσιός): "it is" (ἔστιν), which is pronounced the "path of persuasion, for it attends on truth" (B 2.4: Πειθοῦς ἐστι κέλευθος, Ἀληθείῃ γὰρ ὀπηδεῖ).[67] The other "path" (B 2.6: ἀταρπόν), "is-not," is left unspoken.

The Elean philosopher repeats τὸ ἐόν five times in the surviving fragments. As Mourelatos notes, "ἀλήθεια and τὸ ἐόν are equivalent in Parmenides. It will often be useful to refer to these two indifferently."[68] Herodotus' text similarly divides into a *logos* that literally "is" and those paths that are devoted to veiling truth by ornamenting reality. These three routes veer away from the single, true road that Herodotus ultimately recounts.[69]

The monologic path of truth that Solon and the narrator traverse pulls against the ambivalence that is elsewhere displayed in the discussion of truth claims in the *Histories*. Nor is this singular truth restricted to these

[65] DK 28 B 2.2; B 6.3; B 7.2; B 8.6. N.b., δίζησθαι is also found in Heraclitus, DK 22 B 22; B 101.

[66] Kahn (1969), 705: "[Parmenides'] term for 'inquiry' may be regarded as a poetic equivalent for the Ionian word for scientific investigation (ἱστορίη)." For Herodotus, see Powell s.v. ἱστορέω, which occurs in seventeen passages; ἱστορίη, five; δίζημαι, twenty-nine. This vocabulary is also found in Homer, e.g., *Od.* 11.100.

[67] For the "road of inquiry" metaphor in Parmenides, see DK 28 B 6.9; 7.2. See also Xenophanes DK 21 B 7, who prefaces an anecdote on Pythagoras with the following: "Now again I will traverse another *logos*, and I will demonstrate the path" (νῦν αὖτ' ἄλλον ἔπειμι λόγον, δείξω δὲ κέλευθον). For an alternative reading, see Darbo-Peschanski (2007), 82–91, who has also noted the unusual collocation, λόγος ἐών in the *Histories*. On her interpretation, the apparent similarity to philosophical language is superficial. Instead, Darbo-Peschanski interprets Herodotus' locution as giving one of two definitions: (1) first, "true opinion," or alternatively, (2) πᾶς λόγος "the whole discourse." For her, it is only one among other potentially valid discourses, with final adjudication resting with the narratee: cf. Whitmarsh (2013), 60. For evidence that challenges this reading, see, e.g., Hdt. 5.50.2; 5.106.4.

[68] Mourelatos (2008), 67. Palmer (2009), 107, notes, "τὸ ἐόν, becomes, alongside ἀληθείη, or 'true reality,' one of the goddess's preferred means of referring to the object of her principal discourse." Cherubin (2009), 63, "the road associated with *alētheia* goes far beyond what is required to support truth, unconcealment, or both together."

[69] Asheri-Lloyd-Corcella s.v. 1.95: "The three types of story rejected by Herodotus 'exalted' or 'departed from the truth in order to exalt' . . . the king, either by emphasizing supernatural elements (see 122,3) or by portraying Cyrus' parents as 'great kings' of Ansan (as the official Achaemenid version)."

two passages. Rulers know that truth is unstable in their court, and this is precisely what Histiaeus relies on in his counterfactual deception of Darius: if the Great King heard "the truth" (τὸ ἐόν) from his Ionian subjects – and Histiaeus pretends to be dubious of this – then Darius is all the more to blame for the unrest in Miletus since it is he who removed Histiaeus from his seat of power there (5.106.4). Artemisia is one of the few willing to extend her "real" (ἐοῦσαν) judgment to Xerxes, because she has proven to be working in his best interest (8.68.α1). Alternatively, when the *sophos* Deioces flips the script on tyranny and insinuates himself in the political system by practicing the straightest justice, he does so by gaining a reputation for passing judgment in accordance with "the truth," τὸ ἐόν (1.97.1). Astyages' court compels the cowherd who saved Cyrus' life to stop lying and so he revealed "the true story" τὸν ἐόντα λόγον (1.116.5). Speaking truth to power has its downsides, as when the narrator chastises another *sophos*, Aristagoras, for reporting to the Spartan ruler Cleomenes the true length of the journey against the Persians. He ought not to have spoken "the truth" (τὸ ἐόν), Herodotus drily observes.

While Herodotus need not faithfully interpret Parmenides' fraught use of the verb "be," he does creatively refigure philosophical language for his own historical purposes, in this case, to carve out a discourse of epistemological rigor that had been set out by his contemporaries in intellectual culture.[70] In deploying language familiar from the Eleatic philosophical tradition, he stretches the philosophical referent of "what-is" or "truth" with respect to inquiry and does so in order to draw upon the authority that this language inspired in the broader fifth-century discussion of inquiry. Forking the potentialities of narrative and choosing the path of the true *logos* puts the *Histories* in the realm of the *sophos*, with a control assumed over truth claims that counterbalances the ambivalent treatment that they receive elsewhere.

The Limits of Human Understanding

In the *Histories*, it is significant that truthful narrative is seldom described as the outcome of an effortful process undertaken by the narrator. As we saw above, the Persian subjugation of Lydia by Cyrus spurred a statement

[70] Herodotus does not represent a privileged interpreter of Parmenides' poem, and we cannot retrieve an essentialist "true" interpretation of Parmenides from Herodotus any more than we can from reading Plato's *Parmenides*, *pace* Frank (2014).

on source material with Herodotus' decision to record the "true" *logos* in the face of alternative, non-authoritative paths of narrative. Because these three paths do not merit recounting, the audience is left without a clear understanding of the principles of selection that Herodotus operates with. Instead, we are presented with the polished results of the inquiry, in a process akin to that associated with his successor, Thucydides. More often than hailing the achievement of truth, Herodotus' metacommentary on the status of his source material demonstrates the difficulty of correctly identifying the truthful account of the past. It has been suggested that this enfranchises the reader to continue the work of inquiry in the wake of the historian. However, in many passages the ambivalence about epistemic certainty does not encourage readerly adjudication; instead, it highlights the limits of human knowledge and acculturates the audience to admit these limits and to embrace a fallibilist view of the past as not fully knowable.

In some instances, uncertainty is necessary because the past has been lost to the historical record. So Herodotus cannot relate what the false oracles reported to Croesus, since no one speaks of this (1.47.2); nor can he give the response given to Croesus by the other true oracle, that of Amphiaraus, "for it is not said" (1.49: οὐ γὰρ ὦν οὐδὲ τοῦτο λέγεται). The number of warriors in the Persian army from each nation is not related by any men (7.60.1); nor is the amount awarded to the best of the Greek victors at Plataea (9.81.2). Of the price the Mytileneans expected to receive for delivering up Pactyas, Herodotus confesses, "I am unable to say it accurately" (1.160.2: οὐ γὰρ ἔχω τοῦτό γε εἰπεῖν ἀτρεκέως), since the deal fell apart.

Frequently, conviction is restricted due to the frontiers of contemporary human knowledge. "No one can say" clearly or accurately what comes after the course of the Nile reaches the Deserters (2.31); what is beyond Scythia (4.16.1); north of the Bald Men (4.25.1); north of the Thracians (5.9.1); the precise number of female bakers, concubines, eunuchs, or animals in the train of the Persian army (7.187.1). A similar willingness to historicize contemporary knowledge is present in the common formula "of those we know" (τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν), which bridges the audience's and the narrator's epistemic community. We are informed that Pausanias carried off the greatest victory "of those which we know" (9.64.1), and that the Satrians are the only group "as far as we know" (7.111.1: ὅσον ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν) among the Thracians who never submitted to anyone but remained free "up to my time" (τὸ μέχρι ἐμεῦ). These conditions do not invite the audience to fill in the gaps left by the work of the Herodotean narrator so much as they

underscore the provisional nature of the human community's grasp of the past. It is this fragility that the introduction of the work thematizes in Herodotus' bid to maintain a hold on the past to keep it from fading into obscurity (1.p).

Ambiguity over human action further drives the uncertainty of truth content in history. As Herodotus describes the Spartan king Cleomenes' attack against Argos and the bribery charges brought against him after it, he wavers on the authenticity of Cleomenes' defense. Cleomenes defends himself by saying that he did not conquer Argos because an oracle had revealed to him that he could not do so. Herodotus is unable to adjudicate the truth or falsehood of this justification (6.82.1: οὔτε εἰ ψευδόμενος οὔτε εἰ ἀληθέα λέγων, ἔχω σαφηνέως εἶπαι), although the king does convince the Spartans. Motivation is another obscuring factor, as when Herodotus cannot say for certain whether a portion of Sesostris' army was left along the Phasis intentionally in a colonial effort or because the men deserted (2.103.2). Nor can Herodotus confirm whether Xerxes' decision to cast a cup, a bowl, and a sword into the Hellespont serves as an offering to the Sun or as penitence for his earlier scourging of the Hellespont (7.54.3). Later, it is left unclear whether the Persian cavalry attack the Phocians who were fighting alongside Xerxes at the behest of the Thessalians or on the orders of Mardonius – Herodotus cannot say (9.18.2). It is difficult to imagine precisely what additional inquiry the reader or audience is being asked to invest in resolving these claims definitively in the absence of extratextual evidence.

The uncertainty involved in Herodotus' reconstructing of the past cultivates a reader who is invited to weigh alternative and at times diametrically opposed narratives. After Pausanias conceived of his aim to become a tyrant of Greece, the Spartan king became betrothed to the daughter of the Persian Megabates, a cousin of Darius. Herodotus qualifies this with, "if the story is true" (5.32: εἰ δὴ ἀληθής γέ ἐστι ὁ λόγος), drawing one to evaluate the episode as true or as baseless rumor, without tilting the scale to one side. A similar effect is achieved in the description of the catalyst behind the death of the tyrant of Samos, Polycrates. Some say his murderer, the Persian Oroites, was egged on by a reproach against his record in not having brought Samos over to the Great King; others recount that an envoy from Oroites had been slighted by the tyrant and that this was the cause of his death. The narrator offers no help: "these two causes" (3.122.1: αἰτίαι μὲν δὴ αὗται διφάσιαι) are given and "it is possible for one to believe whichever of them he wishes" (πάρεστι δὲ πείθεσθαι

ὁκοτέρῃ τις βούλεται αὐτέων).[71] There is something very peculiar indeed in a hero's wrestling for truthful *logos* and ending by pinning down this ambivalent dictum. It not only dramatizes the fact that knowledge of the world is hard to get, as Dewald has persuasively argued, but advances an almost aporetic approach to select facts constituting the past.

Conclusion

Beginning in the sixth century, Presocratic thinkers reimagined their relationship to truth and authority, drawing attention to the privileged sphere of the divine in comparison with the weaker claims of men to epistemic certainty. For humans, there are serious obstacles to a true understanding of the nature of reality, as the provisional truth-status awarded to human inquiry by philosophers such as Xenophanes and Parmenides attests. In this respect, Herodotus' experimental text and its preoccupation with the difficulty of achieving truth in the historical record appears to be in dialogue with intellectual culture. In light of this, his repeated narratorial interventions are less peculiar than they may initially seem.

The *Histories* does not espouse a post-truth philosophy, however, in which all opinions are always equally valid and true. Even if its standards are seldom met, monologic truth remains the ideal criterion against which narrative is measured. By domesticating the participle τὸ ἐόν as a referent applicable to the past, Herodotus creatively co-opts philosophical language for his own purposes. Monologic truth, however, does not nullify the conclusions of those who have detected a wider ambivalence surrounding truth claims in the *Histories*. Like Xenophanes, the *Histories* is intent upon attaining a "better" record of historical action, not simply a true one.

[71] Cf. 2.123.1, 2.146.1, 5.45.2.

CHAPTER 7

Herodotean Philosophy

In 1953, the Herodotean scholar John L. Myres wrote that "in the collection of facts about Man, and in the interpretation of them, Herodotus is the only 'pre-Socratic' writer who is preserved in full."[1] The preceding chapters have all attempted to consider how the *Histories* can be read alongside contemporary intellectual culture with Herodotus interpreted as a Presocratic thinker in his own right. This final chapter shifts to the implications of reading Herodotus in this way by looking to his reception in the early fourth century in the *Dissoi Logoi*. What questions does Herodotus raise for subsequent debates? How does allusion to the *Histories* in a treatise that is explicitly philosophical expand our understanding of Herodotus' project? What is the consequence of this for his position in a tradition of inquiry? The *Dissoi Logoi* offers a case study in the reception of the *Histories* as an example of its prominence in intellectual culture. The second half of the chapter reprises the conclusions of the book and reexamines the value of reading what will become early Greek "historiography" alongside philosophy.

Reading Relativism in the *Histories*: Allusion and the *Dissoi Logoi*

Chapter 2 surveyed the ways in which Herodotus' *Histories* interrogated a contemporary debate on relativism. In the near-contemporaneous *Truth* or *Overthrowing Arguments* by Protagoras, the Abderite pursued relativism in a subjective framework, where individual perception is absolutely true, and also in a cultural framework, where a society's norms are ethical for that people. We saw that there is good evidence for a preoccupation with

[1] Myres (1953), 43. He is followed by Benardete (1969), whose cover blurb is often cited: "Herodotus' *Inquiries* should be regarded as our best and most complete document for pre-Socratic philosophy." More impressionistic is Cochrane (1929), 15, "Thucydides is the most scientific, as Herodotus is the most philosophic of Greek historians."

relativism in Athenian drama, as Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Euripides' *Aeolus* and *Phoenissae*, among others, attest. In these plays, relativism poses a threat to social order for its exposure of *nomos* as grounded solely in the unstable compact of community consent. Subjective relativism, meanwhile, dramatizes an even more disturbing viewpoint in its determination that individual conduct is answerable only to said individual's suppositions about what is moral.

The *Histories* is inscribed with philosophical observations evocative of Protagorean cultural relativism: whatever *nomos* exists for a given culture, it is appropriate for it. Yet the critique that Athenian drama offered on the problem of the contingency of *nomos* as legitimated only by communal consent is partially realized in the *Histories* as well. *Nomos* does authorize the acts of the Great King, whatever they are. Still, Herodotus articulates a distinctive approach to the challenge of cultural relativism and the instability of *nomos* by relating it to the subjectivism of rulers such as Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. Communities emerge as stable and reliable entities for generating custom, but individual monarchs display a tendency to unravel consensus and traditional morality through their forceful command of *nomos*. This phenomenon is scaled up in the context of imperial peoples to encompass the relation of the monarchical populace over its subjects.

In different ways, tragedy and comedy illustrate the negative implications of cultural and subjective relativism. By contrast, Herodotus works out the apparent contradictions in cultural relativism and the contingency of *nomos* by pointing to the problem of maintaining communal consensus and tradition in the context of one-man or imperial rule. Operating alongside this criticism is a persistently neutral representation of differing human groups' *nomoi*. These *nomoi* accentuate the ubiquity of cultural difference and habituate the audience of the *Histories* to accept cultural horizons far beyond their own.

The *Dissoi Logoi* offers an opportunity to chart interaction between sophistic arguments on relativism and the *Histories*. This incomplete sophistic treatise is written in a Doric dialect (with a mystifying admixture of Atticism and Ionicism) and has been transmitted in select manuscripts of Sextus Empiricus.[2] It is traditionally dated to the early fourth century and presents twofold arguments on a series of concepts:[3] the good and the

[2] For the dialect, see Weber (1897); Robinson (1979), 51–4.

[3] Its dating is made on the basis of (1) a reference to a "recent" war fought between Athens and her allies against the Lacedaemonians, with the latter victorious, which is interpreted as the Peloponnesian War and (2) a mention of a single son of Polycleitus who has been successfully instructed in the art of sculpture by his father. Extrapolating from these internal references, a

bad, the seemly and the unseemly, the true and the false, and so on. These formal antilogies eventually shift into monologic meditations on wisdom and ignorance, virtue and its teachability, and other sophistic *topoi*. The philosophical arguments it contains have been associated variously with the sophists Protagoras, Gorgias, Hippias, and Socrates.[4] At times these commonalities have been used as proof of authorship, although no one candidate has won many supporters. Until new evidence is forthcoming, the author will remain unknown. What is plain is that the author was wholly embedded in sophistic debates. As a small sample, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s use of antilogy and relativism is evocative of some reports of Protagoras; the doctrine of *kairos* recalls Gorgias; the discussion of justice, Plato's Socrates; the emphasis on the universality of the sophist's knowledge is in keeping with the doctrine of Hippias. Considering this intellectual cosmopolitanism and the initial dialogic structure of argument, which fails to resolve into support for one view, it seems preferable to see the text as surveying questions *dans le vent*, rather than adapting the playbook of a single known figure.[5]

The notion that the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* was aware of the *Histories* has long been doubted. This is surprising, since in the argument for the identity of the "seemly" and the "unseemly," the *Dissoi Logoi* consistently recalls the *Histories* as it builds a case for relativism. These passages have often been identified with ethnographic exempla familiar from Herodotus but have been interpreted as independent and drawing upon a common philosophical source that does not survive. Walther Kranz, for example, explains:

composition at around 403–395 BCE seems probable. For this dating, seminal are Robinson (1979), 34–41, (2003); and Untersteiner (1954), 148, 152. It is favored by Taylor (1911), 93–4; Dupréel (1921), 29; Kranz (1937), 227; Levi (1940), 292; Ramage (1961), 423–4; Sprague (1968); Gera (2000), 22; Ford (2001), 90; Becker and Scholz (2004), 16, 113; Schiappa (2005), 146; Graham 900; Lachance (2016), though hesitantly; and Wolfsdorf (2020). There are a minority of dissenting voices who support earlier and later periods, e.g., Mazzarino (1966), 289–90, dating it to ca. 440 on an understanding of the victory as taking place over the Athenians at Tanagra in 457; this is followed by the recent commentary of Maso (2018). For a Byzantine dating, see Conley (1985); this is convincingly rejected by Robinson (2003), 240–5.

[4] For a summary of those opinions, see Robinson (1979), 41–73; (2003), 238–40. Kranz (1937), 227, "hier ein Schüler, nicht ein Meister spricht." ("Here a student and not a master speaks.") Attempts to treat the author as a Pythagorean, Rostagni (1922), or a neo-Eleatic, as Taylor (1911), have largely fallen out of fashion. For the sophistic cosmopolitanism of the author, see Levi (1940).

[5] The text's mystery is exaggerated, to my view, by Bailey (2008), 249–50. N.b. Robinson (2003), 243, argues that internal evidence suggests some apparently antilogic arguments are preferred by the sophist.

> Ethnographic material, which is important for proving the relativity of moral views, was collected by Protagoras and his ilk: from them it came to Herodotus and the Dorian [sc., the *Dissoi Logoi*]... who presents these sophistic ideas in a particularly pointed form.[6]

The conception of the *Dissoi Logoi* as only groping toward real philosophy has a long pedigree,[7] and it overlaps with an outdated scholarly interpretation that saw Herodotus' own engagement with sophistic thought as entirely derivative. More circumspect is Wilhelm Nestle, who wondered whether the author of the philosophical treatise took his ethnographic exempla from Herodotus directly or through an intermediary; yet even Nestle ultimately sided with the latter option as more probable on the grounds that one of the *nomoi* recorded in the *Dissoi Logoi* on the Lydians is not found in the *Histories*.[8] Along with Kranz, he favored Protagoras as the lost source of both.[9] But Protagoras was not the only superior mind to whom these ethnographic episodes were attributed; elsewhere, they were traced to shadowy historicizing prose figures such as Hecataeus, Dionysius of Miletus, Charon of Lampsacus, and even more implausibly, Damastes of Sigeum, and Xanthus of Lydia.[10] Others suggested an origin in Hippias.[11] A recent commentator on the *Dissoi Logoi*, Stefano Maso, continues this interpretative paradigm of rejecting engagement between the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories*: "it was information that was known to most people or Herodotus took these examples from an older source also known to the

[6] Kranz (1937), 228: "Das für den Beweis der Relativität moralischer Anschauungen wichtige ethnographische Material ist von Protagoras und seinen Gesinnungsgenossen gesammelt worden: von ihnen ist es zu Herodot und zum Dorer ... gelangt, der diese sophistischen Gedanken sogar in besonders zugespitzter Form bringt." There are exceptions, cf. Taylor (1911), 95, who notes in passing that, "one may add, as minor personal touches, that the writer had read his Herodotus." Before him, Theodor Bergk's posthumous piece in 1883 on the authenticity of the text added in a footnote on the subject of what the author had heard from their instructor, 136 n. 1, "Die Beispiele sind unverkennbar zum Theil aus Herodot entlehnt; dieses Werk konnte Gorgias ebenso gut wie sein Schüler benutzen" ("The examples are unmistakably in part borrowed from Herodotus; Gorgias could use this work as well as his student").

[7] E.g., Diels (1907), 635, he is "talentlos," as noted by Iordanoglou and Lindqvist (2018), 77; Graham 877, "At best it is a second-rate work." An exception is Kranz (1937), 227, who calls it "unschätzbar" ("priceless").

[8] Nestle (1942), 437–8. In fact, this Lydian *nomos* does appear to have Herodotean provenance.

[9] Nestle (1942), 440–1. Nestle was revising the position taken by Aly (1929), 119–20, who had argued that they both derived from Hellanicus (as is clear from Maso, this remains influential). Aly's suggestion is cited by Untersteiner (1954), 160, who questions the dependency of the *Dissoi Logoi* on Herodotus and posits a common source.

[10] Mazzarino (1966), 292.

[11] Untersteiner (1996), 465.

anonymous author of the *Dissoi Logoi*: Hellanicus, for example."[12] That is, Herodotus and the *Dissoi Logoi* are reporting generic information or else they were both again drawing upon a more venerable authority.

Even close correspondence has been taken as evidence of independent composition. Santo Mazzarino offered the paradoxical inference that the "independence of the *Dissoi Logoi* from Herodotus can also be deduced from those passages in which the *Dissoi Logoi* seems to concur with Herodotus," as, for example, in the addition of a detail absent from the *Histories*.[13] The prominent commentator T. M. Robinson agrees, clarifying that "some of the statements coincide with what can be found in Herodotus, but it would be rash to assume that the author has copied directly from him, since on a number of occasions he offers detail not found in Herodotus."[14] "Copying," or direct textual adaptation is taken as the standard of authentic interaction and deviation from strict reproduction is viewed as evidence of non-interaction. In fact, there is no evidence that the *Histories* is adapting ethnographical material from earlier source material. Indeed, the older assumption that Herodotus wove together a series of written texts has been displaced by a recognition of his place in a predominantly oral culture. Additionally, an obstacle to the proposal that both drew upon cultural commonplaces is the fact that the two at times preserve uncommon ethnographic details.

Renewed attention to the way in which allusion and intertext function in ancient poetry and in prose also complicates the earlier references to direct "copying" as the signal of interaction or independence. Copying implies the subordination of the alluding text to its source material. Allusion, which will be of central concern here, does not depend upon linguistic identity or hierarchy. It is the "teasing play between revelation and concealment."[15] Allusion adapts and reconfigures language, relying upon the audience's familiarity with the source text. These linguistic modifications, in addition to their new context, alter the sense of the alluding text's meaning and this in turn changes the way in which the source text itself is read, which lends allusion its dynamism. This series of hermeneutic moves enriches the act of listening and reading by allowing the audience to command a powerful role in the construction of meaning.

[12] Maso (2018) on 2.9: "[La datazione 'alta' qui adottato per i *Dissoi Logoi* implica] che si trattasse di notizie ai più note o che Erodoto riprendesse tali esempi da una fonte più antica conosciuta anche dall'Anonimo dei *Dissoi Logoi*: per esempio Ellanico."

[13] Mazzarino (1966), 291: "Questa indipendenza dei *Dissoi Logoi* da Erodoto può dedursi anche da taluni luoghi in cui i *Dissoi Logoi* sembrano concordare con Erodoto stesso."

[14] Robinson (1979), commenting on 2.9.

[15] Hinds (1998), 23.

Through attending to allusion, the audience generates an implied authorial intention.[16] Allusion draws out the way in which the *Dissoi Logoi* activates Herodotus as a philosophical model.

In the argument that the seemly and the unseemly are the same, the author begins with situations that command common Greek assent, as in the view that it is seemly for a wife to have sex with her husband but not another woman's (DK 90 B 2.5). The examples explicitly shift from the conduct of individuals to ethnographic studies of peoples and nations in a hodological frame: "I will go on (εἶμι) to what both cities and peoples (ταὶ πόλιές τε . . . καὶ τὰ ἔθνεα) consider unseemly" (B 2.9). The narrator-as-traveler metaphor perhaps evokes Herodotus most readily,[17] but the reference to cities and peoples recalls the thematic interests of early prose writers, who, according to the famed report of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, wrote history by "dividing up by peoples and by cities" (*Thuc.* 5.21: κατ' ἔθνη καὶ κατὰ πόλεις διαιροῦντες). The sense that one is entering into a travel narrative is confirmed by the spatial organization of what follows. The narrator begins in Sparta, and from there moves north to Thessaly, Macedonia, and Thrace, east toward Scythia, Massagetes, and Persia, and southwest to Lydia and Egypt. The circular progression evokes the circumnavigation familiar from *periodos ges* treatises.[18]

After the *Dissoi Logoi* departs from Greece, it moves to the examples of cultural relativism evident in Macedonia and in Thrace.[19]

> Μακεδόσι δὲ καλὸν δοκεῖ ἦμεν τὰς κόρας, πρὶν ἀνδρὶ γάμασθαι, ἐρᾶσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ συγγίνεσθαι, ἐπεὶ δέ κα γάμηται, αἰσχρόν· Ἕλλασι δ' ἄμφω αἰσχρόν. τοῖς δὲ Θραιξὶ κόσμος τὰς κόρας στίζεσθαι· τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις τιμωρία τὰ στίγματα τοῖς ἀδικέοντι. (DK 90 B 2.12–13)
>
> Among the Macedonians it appears to be seemly that their young women, before they marry a man, conceive a passion for and have sex with a man; whenever she marries, it is considered to be unseemly. To Greeks both are unseemly. And among the Thracians it is decorous for their young women to be tattooed. To others, tattoos are a form of retribution for delinquents.

The allusion in the *Dissoi Logoi* to the *Histories* is activated through its geographical specificity in Thrace and its use of the same verb for tattooing

[16] For a lucid defense of the intention of the "author" in terms of allusion, see Hinds (1998), 47–51.
[17] See Chapter 6 n. 62, on such spatial imagery in Herodotus.
[18] That it follows the pattern of a circumnavigation of the earth is observed by Skinner (2018), 211 n. 102.
[19] See Barnes (1979), ii.214–20, for a discussion of moral relativism in the *Dissoi Logoi*.

(στίζω).[20] During Megabazus' conquest of Thrace, Herodotus pauses the narrative to give a description of the people's *nomoi*. The Thracians sell their children, keep no eye on their daughters, but guard their wives, who are paid for dearly, with great care. Next, Herodotus records that their "being tattooed is judged a mark of nobility, while being without tattoos is ignoble" (5.6.2: τὸ μὲν ἐστίχθαι εὐγενὲς κέκριται, τὸ δὲ ἄστικτον ἀγεννές).

The *Dissoi Logoi* also evokes the chorus leader in Aristophanes' *Birds*, who opposes what is shameful (αἰσχρά) according to the *nomos* of the Athenians to its seemliness and beauty (καλά) among the culture of the birds (755–6). He then affirms that a tattooed (760: ἐστιγμένος) runaway slave in Athens among the birds is simply called "dappled" (761: ποικίλος). Aristophanes corresponds closely to the sophist's statement on the punitive nature of this practice in Greece, by explicitly noting that it is used to torture the bodies of the enslaved. The parodic reversal of cultural values plays upon the same relativizing themes.

Elsewhere, Thracian women's tattooing is not relativized but explained as a punishment in origin, an aetiology that reveals the pull of universal moral values. The late fourth-century philosopher Clearchus apparently expanded upon the story of the tattoos by relating that the Thracian women had been tattooed once by Scythian invaders. These invaders, Clearchus says, were the first people to adhere to "common laws" (νόμοις κοινοῖς), although they later became extremely arrogant in their actions toward foreigners, cutting off the noses of those peoples who they invaded.[21] Likewise, the Scythian women pricked the bodies of Thracian women with needles, marking them with their designs. Later, the Thracian women tattooed over these insults with their own patterns, converting them into "ornamentation" (F 46 Wehrli: κόσμου) and masking their stigma.[22] In another variant, the Thracian women were tattooed by their husbands as punishment for their violent murder of Orpheus.[23]

Above all, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s allusion gestures to the *Histories*. There, the oppositional μέν . . . δέ recreates an antilogic narrative structure, which is reinforced by the contrast of "noble" (εὐγενές) and "ignoble" (ἀγεννές).

[20] This is the only instance in which εὐγενής is used in the text; ἀγεννής also at Hdt. 1.134.1. For the Thracians, cf. Dio. Chrys. *Or.* 14.19; Artem. 1.8. Cratinus composed a comedy, *The Thracian Women*; from F 81 he seems to have parodied Thracian tattooing by making reference to a tattooing in regard to Callias' debts. Aeschylus too wrote a *Thracian Women* about which little is known.

[21] N.b. Intaphrenes, in a fit of hybris, cut off the nose and ears of Darius' enslaved attendants, 3.118.2.

[22] Clearchus includes the "Scythian saying"; for which, see Hdt. 4.127.4.

[23] See Phanocles F 1 Powell = Stob. *Flor.* 4.20b.47 Hense-Wachsmuth, where it is a punishment from Thracian men for their wives' murdering of Orpheus as a reminder of their deeds. Cf. Plut. *De sera* 557d.

These antithetical predicates introduce a strong moral dimension into the practice. For Herodotus, this opposition is wholly internal to the Thracians, marking out divisions within the populace as praiseworthy or otherwise. The gender of the individuals is unmarked but, given the ensuing discussion of male occupations of farming and warmongering, it is difficult to restrict it to women alone. Finally, there is an understated nod to the comparative alterity of this behavior in the statement that caps the passage: "these are the most remarkable of their *nomoi*" (5.6.2).

The alluding text of the *Dissoi Logoi* activates the implicit cultural relativism present in the *Histories*. For the philosopher, the internal differentiation among Thracians turns into an external opposition of Thracians and "others." The juxtaposition of nobility and ignobility in tattooing changes into what is seemly and unseemly for Thracians and non-Thracians. The subtle nod toward the alterity of this norm according to Herodotus becomes wholly explicit in the clarification that this is a punishment for wrongdoers elsewhere. Further, there is a correction of the source text in terms of gender; elsewhere this practice is predominantly associated with women, and the *Dissoi Logoi* revises the *Histories* here too.[24]

There is a second innovation upon the source text in this passage. Herodotus discusses Thracian sexual mores in the sentence prior to his statement on tattooing. The Thracians, he explains, do not guard their young unmarried women but do guard their wives closely since they buy them at a great price (5.6.1: τὰς παρθένους οὐ φυλάσσουσι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐῶσι τοῖσι αὐταὶ βούλονται ἀνδράσι μίσγεσθαι. τὰς γυναῖκας ἰσχυρῶς φυλάσσουσι· ὠνέονται τὰς γυναῖκας παρὰ τῶν γονέων χρημάτων μεγάλων). Like Herodotus, the philosopher moves from the case of young unmarried women (τὰς κόρας/τὰς παρθένους) and their sexual freedoms (ἐρᾶσθαι καὶ ἀνδρὶ συγγίνεσθαι/ἀλλ᾽ ἐῶσι τοῖσι αὐταὶ βούλονται ἀνδράσι μίσγεσθαι) to consider the very different behavior expected of wives, whose sexuality is policed with care (ἐπεὶ δέ κα γάμηται, αἰσχρόν/ τὰς γυναῖκας ἰσχυρῶς φυλάσσουσι). The same themes are treated in precisely the same sequence.[25] The *Dissoi Logoi*'s reference, however, revises its location,

[24] In the *Histories*, the tattoos are associated with those of "noble rank." Immediately following is a reference to what is most honorable (not to work) as a profession and least (to till the soil), with the qualification that most honorable of all is to make a living by war and plunder. These vocations are associated with men, so there is reason to interpret Herodotus' inked Thracians as men. This is followed by, e.g., Str. 7.5.4; Cic. *Off.* 2.7; Eust. *in D.P.* 332 Müller.

[25] Robinson (1979) ad loc. does not observe the connection with the *Histories*. He suggests that there is a difference between premarital and extramarital intercourse and hypothesizes that premarital

affirming that it is practiced among the Thracians' neighbors, the Macedonians.[26] This alteration is only apparent if the audience returns to the *Histories*, a fact that suggests that the *Dissoi Logoi* is cultivating a vigilant reader.

Allusion to ethnographic detail found in the *Histories* continues in references to Scythian scalping, funerary cannibalism among the Massagetes, filial sex work in Lydia, and the Egyptians' inclination toward what is elsewhere treated as unseemly. In each case, the argument in support of the relativity of the "seemly" and the "unseemly" uses cultural relativism as a framework. In drawing upon the static ethnographic exempla found in the *Histories*, the treatise defuses the critique that cultural relativism cannot account for the diachronic and arbitrary change of customs based on communal consensus. Additionally, it nowhere employs the morally radioactive position of subjective relativism.

When the *Dissoi Logoi* comes to Persia, tellingly, it is to affirm the relativity of incest.

> τοὶ δὲ Πέρσαι . . . καλὸν νομίζοντι καὶ τᾷ θυγατρὶ καὶ τᾷ ματρὶ καὶ τᾷ ἀδελφᾷ συνίμεν· τοὶ δὲ Ἕλλανες καὶ αἰσχρὰ καὶ παράνομα. (2.15)
>
> The Persians consider it seemly . . . to have sex with their daughter, mother, and sister; but the Greeks consider this both unseemly and contrary to *nomos*.

This sounds like the Euripidean sentiment that "the whole barbarian race is like this: | father has sex with daughter, son with mother, | and sister with brother . . . and no *nomos* forbids any of these things" (*Andr.* 173–6). Indeed, the scholiast notes of Euripides' line that "all Persians have such customs."[27] Antisthenes apparently stated that Alcibiades was a transgressor of the law (παράνομον) in terms of his behavior with women, "as he had sex with mother, daughter, and sister, like the Persians" (Ath. 5.220c: συνεῖναι γὰρ καὶ μητρὶ καὶ θυγατρὶ καὶ ἀδελφῇ, ὡς τοὺς Πέρσας). In contrast with these negative depictions of the practice as unlawful, in

intercourse could refer to "trial marriage" among the Macedonians. Yet the parallel clarifies that trial marriage is not at stake; instead, daughters are free to have sex with whomever they please outside of the marriage bond.

[26] There is a potential trace of this practice in the term κορινᾶος, "son of unmarried girl," which is preserved by the historian Marsyas, who may be identified with a historian of Macedon, *FGrH* 135–6 F 24. Thracian men were known for having sex with multiple women, see Eur. *Andr.* 215–17; Σ in *Andr.* 217; *FGrH* 12 F 10 for the *nomos* that one man could sleep with many women in Thrace, according to Asclepiades' Thamyris.

[27] Σ in Eur. *Andr.* 174: πάντα Περσικὰ ἔθη.

the *Dissoi Logoi* Persian incest is not morally depraved. Its unlawfulness is pointedly only valid among the Greeks.[28]

Persian incest offends Greek moral and legal sensibility, as it is both "unseemly" and, in the only instance of this term in the text, "contrary to *nomos*." As discussed in Chapter 2, Herodotus narrates the rise of the Persian *nomos* legitimating incestuous marriage between siblings in his account of the reign of Cambyses. In that passage, Cambyses searched for a *nomos* allowing him to marry his sister, which culminated in the ratification of sibling marriage for Cambyses, a custom explicitly deemed unlawful among the Persians before this (3.31.4). The *Dissoi Logoi* simplifies the portrait of relativism, eliminating the pressure from the despot in this process and its conflict with traditional Persian *mores*. The *nomos* is made static and unchanging, erasing the monarchic challenge to the stability of communal custom. This obviates the critique of those protesting relativism's arbitrariness. So too, in the alluding text "the Persians" as a populace replace Herodotus' Cambyses, and his desire to marry his sister is luridly extended to include mothers and daughters as well, in a violation of all injunctions against incest.[29] The allusion smooths over the justification of what is traditionally immoral in Persia and instead treats the *nomos* as yet another instance of a neutral case study in cultural difference.

The argument for relativism culminates in a hypothetical experiment and a quotation from an unknown poet:[30]

> οἶμαι δ', αἴ τις τὰ αἰσχρὰ ἐς ἓν κελεύοι συνενεῖκαι πάντας ἀνθρώπως, ἃ ἕκαστοι νομίζοντι, καὶ πάλιν ἐξ ἀθρόων τούτων τὰ καλὰ λαβέν, ἃ ἕκαστοι ἄγηνται, οὐδὲ ἕν <κα> καλλειφθῆμεν, ἀλλὰ πάντας πάντα διαλαβέν. οὐ γὰρ πάντες ταὐτὰ νομίζοντι. παρεξοῦμαι δὲ καὶ ποίημά τι·
>
> καὶ γὰρ τὸν ἄλλον ὧδε θνητοῖσιν νόμον
> ὄψῃ διαιρῶν· οὐδὲν ἦν πάντῃ καλόν,
> οὐδ' αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ ταὔτ' ἐποίησεν λαβών
> ὁ καιρὸς αἰσχρὰ καὶ διαλλάξας καλά.
> (DK 90 B 2.18–19)
>
> I think that if someone ordered all peoples to gather together the things that each one considered unseemly and then to take away from the heaps those

[28] Xanthus of Lydia, *BNJ* 765 F 31, wrote that the Magi could have sex with their mothers, daughters, and sisters. Ctesias, *FGrH* 688 at F 44a and F44b, claimed that the Persians slept with their mothers openly. See too Philo *Spec.* 3.13.

[29] Similar are the anxieties of Tatianus, *Ad Gr.* 28.1, when he condemns the diversity of human *nomoi* in oppositions of Greeks versus Persians (on the Oedipus complex) and foreigners versus Romans (on pederasty).

[30] For a discussion of this experiment, see Gera (2000), 35–8.

> things that each one considered seemly, nothing would be left, but everything would be divided up by everyone. For all people do not think the same things. I shall also cite some verses:
>
> For you will see, if you distinguish, a different law | for mortals, like this: nothing is seemly in every regard, | nor unseemly, but the right occasion (*kairos*) takes the same things | and makes them unseemly and, changing them, seemly.

The conclusion of the argument reintroduces an intrusive first-person *persona loquens* in a hypothetical experiment in which all bring together what is blameworthy and take away what is praiseworthy, with nothing left behind. This reinforces the earlier references to the relativity of cultural norms by scaling up to *all* humans. The moral predicates "seemly" and "unseemly" are not pegged to general standards of action. The verses bolster this case but do so paradoxically by invoking a universal *nomos* for humans – something that has been challenged by the preceding ethnographic studies – that "right occasion" alone dictates the referent of the seemly and the unseemly.

Structurally, the argument proceeds from hypothetical experiment to supporting poetic verse. The generic setting of a gathering and exchange of items by all peoples and the use of a verse as a closural formula to bolster claims on relativism artfully alludes to Herodotus and his reasoning on the madness of Cambyses and the relativity of religious *nomoi*.[31] Recall that Cambyses was alienated from Persian and Egyptian norms and deemed mad by Herodotus:

> εἰ γάρ τις προθείη πᾶσι ἀνθρώποισι ἐκλέξασθαι κελεύων νόμους τοὺς καλλίστους ἐκ τῶν πάντων νόμων, διασκεψάμενοι ἂν ἑλοίατο ἕκαστοι τοὺς ἑωυτῶν· οὕτω νομίζουσι πολλόν τι καλλίστους τοὺς ἑωυτῶν νόμους ἕκαστοι εἶναι ... ὡς δὲ οὕτω νενομίκασι τὰ περὶ τοὺς νόμους οἱ πάντες ἄνθρωποι (3.38.1–2)
>
> For if someone were to put a proposition before all men, ordering them to select the noblest *nomoi* for themselves from all *nomoi*, after examining them thoroughly each people would choose those of their own. So each

[31] Gera (2000), 37, noting the parallels in ethnography, rightly points out that "it is possible that the historian was also the inspiration for the theoretical trial," although this is modified at n. 54 and n. 66 with reference to scholars identifying a Protagorean hypotext. According to Gera, Herodotus' experiment is simpler than that found in the *Dissoi Logoi* as "he does not stress the relativity of values." While it is correct that Herodotus' experiment is "simpler," describing their difference in these terms occludes more than it reveals.

> people consider that by far the noblest are their own *nomoi* . . . this is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi*.

Both hypothetical experiments use a future less vivid conditional and begin with an anonymous organizer (τις/τις). In the *Histories*, this individual orders (κελεύων) all men (πᾶσι ἀνθρώποισι) to select the most praiseworthy *nomoi*;[32] in the *Dissoi Logoi*, he orders (κελεύοι) all men (πάντας ἀνθρώπως) to bring together what they consider (νομίζοντι) unseemly and take away the seemly. In these hypothetical gatherings, each (ἕκαστοι) departs with what is desirable for him. The *Dissoi Logoi* reworks Herodotus' statement that "this is the way that all men have observed things concerning *nomoi*," affirming that "all men do not observe the same things." After providing a further case study in the juxtaposition of Callatian (a *nomos* found also in the *Dissoi Logoi* but of the Massagetes) and Greek burial practices, Pindar is wheeled out for support in the quote of F 169a, via the intrusive "rightly, it seems to me," ὀρθῶς μοι δοκέει. The *Dissoi Logoi* follows the narratorial interjection with παρεξοῦμαι, "I will furnish," and then quotes the words of the unknown poet.[33] Stefano Maso has commented on the *Dissoi Logoi* that this kind of poetic source attribution is a "typical sophistic practice." No doubt this is correct. Yet the quotation's context and linguistic correspondences suggest that the *Dissoi Logoi* is continuing a pointed play on and reshaping of Herodotus' *Histories*.

The interaction is picked up on by Maximus of Tyre, who alludes to both in his oration, "Plato on God." In a preamble to the statement that all humans believe in a sovereign higher power, Maximus too envisions a hypothetical gathering: "if you were to order (εἰ . . . κελεύοις) a collection of experts in an assembly and command all gathered (ἅπαντας ἀθρόους)" to speak about god, then all – Scythians, Greeks, Persians, and Hyperboreans – would say the same thing (*Or.* 11.4), he argues.[34] Initially, this tells against the relativism that the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories* advocated for; however, a counterfactual follows. In every other respect, men express differences in opinion from one another. As examples,

[32] Gera (2000), 38, attractively suggests that this might refer to the Persian ruler as the organizer of the hypothetical experiment.

[33] Cf. Ar. *Av.* 755–6: ὅσα γὰρ ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶν αἰσχρὰ καὶ νόμῳ κρατούμενα, | ταῦτα πάντ' ἐστὶν παρ' ἡμῖν τοῖσιν ὄρνισιν καλά ("For all the things that are shameful here and dominated by *nomos*, all of these things are seemly among us birds"). Interesting in connection with this is the rejection of an instance of relativism among foreigners and Greeks at Eur. *Andr.* 243–4.

[34] Cf. Hdt. 2.3.2.

the good is not the same thing for all, nor the bad, "nor the unseemly or the seemly" (οὐ τὸ αἰσχρόν, οὐ τὸ καλόν). The sentiment captures the subjects of the first two antilogies in the *Dissoi Logoi* while evoking the second antilogy's assembly of seemly and unseemly things. Maximus then continues with a reference to *nomos* and justice (νόμος μὲν γὰρ δὴ καὶ δίκη), which are also concepts that meet with human disagreement. In these terms, nations, cities, and even individuals are all at a variance with one another. In making reference not solely to moral predicates, but also custom and justice, nations, and cities, Maximus weaves together Herodotus' use of a nomological marketplace to endorse the differences in human *nomoi* and the necessity for tolerance that such difference should elicit. The structural play on the *Dissoi Logoi* and the *Histories* concludes, as might be expected, with another learned quotation – in this case, from *the* poet, Homer (*Od.* 18.136–7).

If Herodotean ethnography and argumentative structure are present in the case that the *Dissoi Logoi* makes for relativism, it is telling that the opposing position, which is also expounded by the philosopher (on the distinctiveness of the seemly and the unseemly), rejects the validity of ethnography and the hypothetical marketplace. The "identity thesis," or the notion that the seemly and unseemly are the same, is pushed to an absurd conclusion: if the seemly and the unseemly are truly the same, then they should be able to be so at the same time with reference to the same group. This is a premise that the first speech would reject, but it is nonetheless used to produce the *reductio* that if it is praiseworthy for Spartan women to exercise, then it is also blameworthy for them to exercise. The second speech also cites category confusion as a weakness of the relativists: moral categories have stable identities much like horses, cows, sheep, and people do. Bringing moral categories into a hypothetical marketplace does not have the power to alter this stable, underlying constituent any more than individuals each bringing horses into an agora will lead away something other than a horse. In its rejection of the relativism of these moral predicates, the *Dissoi Logoi* discards the potential of ethnography to shape moral intuitions and the applicability of a hypothetical marketplace of *nomoi*. Interpreted alongside the first speaker, Herodotus emerges as his flawed precursor. Even the reference to learned quotation comes under fire as misleading: "they call the poets in as witnesses, who compose for pleasure, not truth" (B 2.28).

Through these interactions, the *Dissoi Logoi*'s arguments on relativism announce themselves as highly allusive. The treatise reworks Herodotean themes of ethnographic difference, narratorial neutrality, and a cultivation

of tolerance in the audience. The philosopher follows the *Histories* in highlighting the power of cultural relativism and in eliding the implications of subjective relativism in the argument – unlike Protagoras' apparent method of using both to make his case. The persistence of the allusion endows the *Dissoi Logoi*'s brief argument in favor of the relativity of the moral predicates "seemly" and "unseemly" with the heft of Herodotus' much more expansive ethnographic progression. Rereading the source text positions it as a philosophical precursor to the *Dissoi Logoi*. Herodotus' narrative assumes a polemical and sophisticated intellectual dimension that is appropriated in the Dorian treatise. The engagement of the *Dissoi Logoi* is, however, creative through its implicit elision, condensing, and correction of the *Histories*. Additionally, its protreptic purpose allows no individual to threaten communal norms, in contrast to Herodotus' description of the rulers of Persia or the imperial pull of its people on their subjects.

The *Dissoi Logoi* and Herodotus participate in the same philosophical tradition on the nature of relativism and its implications for communities. The treatise engages with select passages from the *Histories* on the cultural practices of foreigners and explores the persuasiveness of relativism by making a defense of and an attack on this philosophical position. But it is not simply the case that they are part of the same tradition; *Dissoi Logoi*'s recurrent allusiveness acknowledges Herodotus' place within that tradition.

As for Herodotus, taking part in contemporary debates necessitates an understanding of the human experience across space. This case study has sketched out only one example in the early reception of the *Histories* to demonstrate the potential connections to be made between the *Histories* and philosophical texts and concepts. The reception of Herodotus as a philosophical thinker might have equally been undertaken in, for example, an analysis of relevant sections of Plato's *Laws* 3, the *Timaeus-Critias* dialogues, or the first book of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. This circumscribed exercise offers a window into an alternative history of historical inquiry, one in which Herodotus was part of a larger community of Presocratic thinkers experimentally extending the boundaries of the known world.

The *Histories* and Intellectual Culture

> *Mihi h. l. videtur historiae pater Demaratum ea facere dicentem, quae tunc temporis a Graeciae sapientibus maxime agitabantur inque scholis et conventibus maxime disceptabantur: talia enim afferre ab*

> *Herodoti consiliis haudquaquam alienum fuisse arbitror, Graeciae laudes celebraturi.*
>
> Johann Christian Felix Baehr (1856–61), s.v. 7.102

> It seems to me that in this passage the father of history had Demaratus say those things that were at that time debated most of all by the wise men of Greece and treated most of all in their schools and at their gatherings: in fact, I suppose that to bring in such things was not at all foreign to the plan of Herodotus, since he was going to celebrate the praises of Greece.

In his monumental commentary on the *Histories*, the nineteenth-century German philologist Johann Christian Felix Baehr regularly draws attention to sources and sketches out the connections between Herodotus and the philosophers. In this lemma on Demaratus' response to Xerxes in Book 7, Baehr expands his focus to remark on the wider plan of the *Histories*. In his view, Demaratus' words on Greek poverty, virtue, wisdom, and *nomos* exemplify the philosophical discourse of the day. Herodotus' memorialization comprises, then, not simply a record of the deeds and events associated with the Greco-Persian Wars but also the intellectual sophistication of the age.

Baehr's judgment, while valuable, can be nuanced in several ways. As we have seen, Herodotus emerges less as an encomiastic inheritor of philosophy in the *Histories* and more as a creative competitor in the Presocratic marketplace of ideas. His Demaratus is no puppet for an anachronistic Academy. Further, contemporary debates are to be situated within the arc of the narrative, rather than treated as fragments of sophistic influence, as Baehr and his successors imagined. Still, Baehr's fundamental insight on the "plan" of the *Histories* as intentionally opening a window into intellectual culture is a persuasive one. From Sicily to Miletus, the vitality of thinkers – who included individuals who would now be classified as biologists, mystics, logicians, ethicists, astronomers, geologists, and orators, among many more post-Platonic designations – resulted in an astonishing body of inquiry. In its encyclopaedic breadth, the *Histories* reflects this multiplicity.

This book began with a discussion of the problematic generic status of Herodotus' experimental prose work. In the absence of a genre of historiography, its affinities with scientific and medical prose treatises situate the *Histories* within the dynamic intellectual culture of the fifth century BCE. Herodotus' place in this context has often been associated with empiricist inquiry and, on this reading, removed from the more theoretical debates preoccupying the Presocratic thinkers. Herodotus'

engagement with empiricism *is* an essential component of his project and is manifest in his emphasis on personal autopsy and on material remains, as well as in his discussions of ethnography, earth science, and geography. Yet he also explores debates that are not restricted to sensory experience. The preceding chapters attempted to demonstrate this through a series of case studies on the themes of relativism, egoism, nature, and narrative authority and epistemology, which are familiar from Presocratic thought. While the *Histories*' interaction with Presocratic philosophy does not exhaust its affinities with contemporary prose and poetic genres, it does remain a vital lens through which to examine Herodotus' *historie*. An even stronger outcome of this book has been the contention that the genres that will become historiography and philosophy were not severed from one another in the fifth century BCE; instead, they cross-fertilized and responded alike to the vibrant intellectual milieu characteristic of the period. Of course, the *Histories* is not reducible to a *peri physeos* text on the model of the so-called natural philosophers – Herodotus' work is more pioneering than this – but neither are the texts of the Presocratics themselves so narrowly conceived, as we have seen from Chapter 1.

Herodotus' *Histories* discloses a space for philosophical knowledge, and he is evidently engaging with the Presocratic milieu in a much more sustained manner than has previously been observed. His narrative shapes a new medium in which this material can be assessed in historical time. In processing debates on relativism, egoism, nature, and epistemology in the context of the long march bringing Persia into mainland Greece, Herodotus raises the stakes of these philosophical questions by leveraging an abstract set of issues on concrete moments of human action in the past. The generative interaction of historiography and philosophy showcases the power of scientific discourse in the fifth century and the ability of the new study of the past to reflect forcefully upon Herodotus' present. Historiography, then, does more than re-present the past. Its lessons for the historical present are equally important, as is clear from the prominence of the set-piece on well-being and the limits inherent in the human condition as discussed by Solon and Croesus – these issues will motivate philosophical treatises for the whole of antiquity.

We can contrast this with the philosopher Empedocles and his description of the wise man, who he treats as one aware of the lived experiences of numerous men:

> There was a certain man among them who knew very much, | who acquired the greatest wealth (πλοῦτον) of the mind. . .for when he reached out with

> all his mind, | he easily saw each of all the things that are | in ten and twenty lives of men (ῥεῖ᾽ ὅ γε τῶν ὄντων πάντων λεύσσεσκεν ἕκαστον | καί τε δέκ᾽ ἀνθρώπων καί τ᾽ εἴκοσιν αἰώνεσσιν). (DK 31 B 129).

Porphyry, who preserves the passage, reports that Empedocles was here referring to Pythagoras. This might be thought apposite, as Pythagoras was said to have remembered his past lives.[35] Yet Empedocles' remark generalizes; the sage does not view things that took place in ten or twenty of *his own* past lives, but of "men." Knowledge of the lived experience of men is a wealth of its own. It is also a kind of historical understanding. For Empedocles, as for Herodotus, it is an aspiration worthy of the *sophos*.

This insight evolved beyond Herodotus and the Presocratics, on the one hand, in the *History* of Thucydides, who is by no accident regularly considered a "child of the sophistic movement."[36] In this respect, Thucydides is more a continuator of his predecessor than a trailblazer. On the other hand, the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon deploy what are ostensibly historical interactions to demonstrate the immediacy of the philosophical questions that they raise. And, as we have seen throughout the book, they regularly take up and explore issues also raised by Herodotus. Even the gulf that eventually emerged between philosophy and historiography as they became distinct genres continued to be bridgeable, even if it was not always bridged. The works of Polybius, Posidonius, Diodorus Siculus, and Plutarch, for example, are preoccupied with philosophical questions and debates, even as they are firmly "historical." In this respect, Herodotus' inquiry made its mark on the genre of historiography, even if this requires unthinking that genre to become alive to this. However, this *Nachleben* takes us well beyond the purview of this study and must remain only a tantalizing nod to the success of Herodotus' work as a triumph of Presocratic thought.

[35] In citing this passage, Tor (2017), 323, refers to him as an "epistemological hero."
[36] Handley (1985), 445; he is also referred to as its "major surviving representative."

APPENDIX 1

Tolerance or Relativism?

Chapter 2 argued that the *Histories* espouses cultural relativism and that each culture's *nomoi* are coherent and valid for it to practice. It might be objected, however, that the *Histories* merely displays a tolerance for the variety of *nomoi* found in diverse human cultures. One who judges certain cultural norms correct can still be tolerant of those she disagrees with. The tolerance argument would entail that Herodotus holds that there are objectively correct *nomoi* but that he declines to pass negative judgment on those that are wrong. For example, Herodotus might be willing to register the diversity of human *nomoi*, while not viewing these differences as desirable.

An impediment to the position that Herodotus is a cultural absolutist is that there is no hint of what "right" custom might be. I am not aware of any dogmatic statements coming from Herodotus regarding cultural practices that are correct for all societies. More to the point, the *locus classicus* for identifying cultural relativism (or tolerance) in the *Histories* includes a quotation from Pindar (3.38.4) that actively works against cultural absolutism and for a position of relativism. The words "*Nomos*, king of all" are followed in the Pindaric fragment by "of mortals and immortals" (θνατῶν τε καὶ ἀθανάτων). These lyrics rework Zeus' position as "king of all, mortals and immortals." In Homer, the formula is Zeus "father of men and gods" (πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν). Already in the early fifth century, Heraclitus capitalized on the association in his fragment, "war is the father of all, the king of all" (B 53: πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς). A verse of Corrina's has been credibly restored along these lines as well: Δεὺς πατεὶ[ρ πάντω]ν βασιλεύς.[1] In the *Cratylus*, Zeus' name is etymologized by Socrates as the "lifegiver" (396a: αἴτιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ζῆν), who is "ruler and king of all" (ἄρχων τε καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν πάντων). Similarly, the Aristotelian *de Mundo* calls Zeus "king, ruler of all" (*Mu.*

[1] F 1a.13 *PMG*.

401b: Ζεὺς βασιλεύς, Ζεὺς ἀρχὸς ἁπάντων). *Nomos*, then, is a stand-in for Zeus. This is corroborated by its ability to "make just" (δικαιῶν) actions traditionally deemed unjust. Zeus' connection with justice (δίκη) is, of course, persistent from early epic onward.[2] Pindar's startling personification of *Nomos* elevates it to a principle akin to cosmic order. In its context in the *Histories*, this suggests that it is not just the case that there are simply a variety of *nomoi* in the world but that these *nomoi* are part of a structure of underlying stability. The evocation of Zeus and his divine authority over all beings does not simply imply a tolerance for the diversity of human *nomoi*; it indicates a sanction, a validity, to this variety. By including the lyric, and explicitly calling attention to Pindar's correctness in formulating it as he does (Herodotus says it was composed "rightly," ὀρθῶς), the *Histories* imports the association with divine regulation into the context of the nomological marketplace and Darius' findings on the range of *nomoi* and the tenacity with which they are held. This is not to suggest that Herodotus (or Pindar) is making a literal apotheosis of *nomos*; there is no evidence to support that extreme claim. Instead, the intertext acts as a capstone to the argument by pointing to the validity of different cultural systems through the formula descriptive of Zeus' rule.

An additional obstacle to those favoring tolerance over relativism is the perspective that the text adopts at 3.38. In a classic paper on relativism and tolerance, Geoffrey Harrison reasoned that the relativist assumes an external perspective, that of the observer. By contrast, one who is tolerant adopts an internal perspective within a given system.[3] Tolerance is the position taken by a participant. As Harrison states, "tolerance . . . must be from *some* point of view."[4] It is for this reason significant that from the beginning of the hypothetical experiment, Herodotus invites an observer perspective: "For if someone were to put a proposition before all men . . . ordering" (3.38.1: εἰ γάρ τις προθείη πᾶσι ἀνθρώποισι . . . κελεύων).[5] Then, when Darius arranges his actual experiment with the Callatian Indians and the Greeks, he too assumes an outsider's gaze, as one who follows neither custom. Both cases cultivate the point of view of an observer who sees more than the cultural agents in each experiment. In the madness of Cambyses episode, tolerance would be the response of a cultural agent internal to the experiment of the nomological marketplace or the testing of burial practices. Instead, we find third-party figures. I suggest that these spectators, by standing outside of the cultural system

[2] E.g., Hes. *Op.* 239. [3] Harrison (1976). [4] Harrison (1976), 132.
[5] Cf. 7.152.2, where the observer is not included.

under examination, illustrate the way in which they are equally valid. This is reinforced by the neutral stance of the narrator, himself a Greek. According to the example of the Greeks in Darius' court, Herodotus should reject the practices of those outside of Greece. Yet he does no such thing and instead acts like an onlooker of Greek and Callatian *nomoi* with Darius, offering up no ammunition for the cultural absolutist.

A further passage that speaks against the argument that cultural absolutism lurks within the *Histories* can be found in the description of Cambyses' abuse of the body of Amasis (3.16). Cambyses ordered the burning of Amasis, an act that is said to contravene both Egyptian and Persian funerary custom. Here, Herodotus emboldens the reader to interpret Cambyses' actions as sacrilegious by situating them within Egyptian and Persian cultural traditions (3.16.3), since from a Greek standpoint Cambyses' deed might have been mistaken as a cremation burial. Again, one is positioned beyond Hellenic perspectives on funerary practices, as they are outlined in Darius' experiment, by treating the Persian and Egyptian injunction against cremation neutrally.[6] This episode challenges rather than confirms Greek notions as to what is non-normative and blameworthy.

In his introduction of the Egyptian *logos* that is Book 2, Herodotus explains that he is reluctant to relate stories that he has heard concerning the divine, "considering that all men know equally about these things" (2.3.2: νομίζων πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἴσον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπίστασθαι). Regarding these traditions, Herodotus is not tolerant of Egyptian narratives on the divine, while believing his own correct. He offers a transcultural acceptance of man's stories about the gods. Whether we interpret this as a claim to knowledge or, as I prefer, a wry remark on man's real ignorance in matters of the divine makes no difference. In either case, different national traditions about the gods are on the same footing. Like *nomoi*, these stories are coherent within their own cultural systems.

The case for the madness of Cambyses starts off by highlighting the relationship between exposure to diverse *nomoi* and respect for these practices. As ruler of the Egyptians, Cambyses is made an observer of foreign customs but fails to become tolerant and instead laughs at cultural difference. Tolerance is flagged as the response of a practitioner of norms faced with alternative customs. However, the observers – of the

[6] A variation on this theme occurs in Xerxes' abuse of the corpse of Leonidas. Herodotus relates that this was clear proof of the extreme hatred Xerxes held for him because the Persians as a people in particular honor men noble in war, 7.238.

nomological marketplace and of the experiment on the Callatian Indians and Greeks – move the argument in a new direction, where what is right for a given people need not be what is right for one's own. Pindar's quotation affirms that cultural diversity is part of the nature of the world order.

APPENDIX 2

"Strong" and "Weak" Relativism

In an influential article, Richard Bett argued that there is no "strong" sense of relativism evident among fifth-century sophists, barring, provisionally, Protagoras. Instead, much or all that is defined as relativism is "weak" ethical relativism and "uninteresting."[1] In making his case, Bett defines strong relativism as entailing that a statement is correct or incorrect relative to a given framework. Pointedly, this framework precludes any Archimedean vantage point. As an example, tattooing may be immoral in one culture but moral for another, with no superior standard according to which these positions can be adjudicated. Alternatively, weak relativism is situational. It dictates what is good, virtuous, bad, or shameful, and so on, according to the situation. That is, giving assistance to a friend may be noble when they are in their right mind but shameful when they are mad. As Bett concedes, "these arguments admittedly have to do with a kind of relativity; they assert that one cannot say what is good, just or virtuous without qualification, but only in relation to specific circumstances. However, this is . . . only superficially relativistic."[2] They are superficially relativistic in part because weak relativism is still hypothetically compatible with a god's-eye or objective point of view. For example, one might assert that it is objectively noble to help friends in their right minds and shameful if they are mad. This would then suggest an objective concept of justice underlies both positions. Bett's position has found wide acceptance among those working on the sophists; however, in its focus on these fragmentary figures, it neglected the additional contexts in which relativism was debated in the fifth century. The conclusion that sophistic relativism is

[1] Bett (1989), 141. Accepted by Barney (2006), 87. For a provisional acceptance of Bett's argument, see Lee (2005), 9–10.

[2] Bett (1989), 146–7. There is doubtless a situational relativism found among the philosophers, cf. Gorgias, as recorded in Arist. *Pol.* 1260a, and the *Dissoi Logoi*, e.g., 1.1–10, 2.1–8.

weak can, I submit, be challenged by attending to passages that fall outside of the "sophists" proper.

In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, there is evidence for strong relativism in the words of Eteocles:[3]

> εἰ πᾶσι ταὐτὸν καλὸν ἔφυ σοφόν θ' ἅμα | οὐκ ἦν ἂν ἀμφίλεκτος ἀνθρώποις ἔρις | νῦν δ' οὔθ' ὅμοιον οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἴσον βροτοῖς | πλὴν ὀνόμασιν: τὸ δ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔστιν τόδε.
>
> If to all the same thing were by nature noble and wise, there would be no strife talking out of both sides of its mouth among humans: but as it is nothing is similar or equal for mortals except for names – but this is not the thing itself.

Eteocles' words are a nimble response to his brother, who had closed his own speech by affirming that he avoided deceitful rhetoric in preference to what is "just to the wise" (495–6). To discount the claim, Eteocles shifts to the abstract values of nobility and justice and the fact that language (ὀνόμασιν) captures in a single term what in reality (ἔργον) has no stable determinant. The strife that arises from this between men is literally "spoken on two sides" (ἀμφίλεκτος); it is a polyphonic struggle for meaning. It is possible that the statement should be interpreted as another instance of situational relativism, but if so, what precisely are the situational parameters for determining what is noble and wise? Eteocles does not offer any. Beyond the absence of an explicit situational framework, there is an additional problem for interpreting this as a case of weak relativism: Eteocles claims that *nothing* is similar or equal for men. This makes the case for a situational standard of behavior operative behind Eteocles' words even more difficult to maintain, since the human values of nobility and wisdom are expressed in language with referents that vary according to the individual, not according to the situation in which individuals find themselves. Further, the evaluative framework for this disagreement is explicitly "mortals" (βροτοῖς), which recalls Protagoras' man-measure doctrine. What of the potential for an objective point of view? In making his case against the sophists, Bett maintains that their formulations do "not deny that there might be some objectively correct general definition of goodness, justice, or whatever the evaluative concept under scrutiny."[4] Yet, the impossibility of objectivity in identifying

[3] L-M 'Dramatic Appendix' T 68 = *Phoen*. 499–502. For discussion, see pp. 46–7.
[4] Bett (1989), 147.

nobility and wisdom is precisely what is at stake in Eteocles' words. For man, these concepts share only names, not what underlies them.

The opposition of language and reality and the reference to values such as wisdom and nobility having a "nature" (ἔφυ) put the passage squarely in the sphere of the "correctness of language" debate, one that Protagoras was known to have been closely associated with from the title of his lost work, *Orthoepeia* (Pl. *Phdr*. 267c). Eteocles rejects the potential for natural correctness in naming, establishing a rift between language and its referents, a position that implicitly relies upon convention, a rickety foundation for any objective sense to be present behind these terms.[5] Much like Hermogenes in Plato's *Cratylus*, Eteocles points to the absence of an objective relation between language and the world.[6] As the ability to discuss values is mediated by language, there is no objective path to process these terms. And since Bett identified strong relativism as statements made correctly or incorrectly relative to a given framework, the severance of language from reality provides the foundation for individual humans to serve as the framework for determining that statements are correct or incorrect, with no possibility of an independent vantage point.

In addition to the subjectivism of the individual, there is also debate in the fifth century on the status of *nomoi* as relative to a given society. The strong form of relativism for such a conception would be as follows, according to Bett:[7]

> It makes no sense to talk of things being right or wrong *physei*. Rather, there are merely various sets of *nomoi* in various different communities; and rightness and wrongness, in any given community, is relative to the *nomoi* prevalent in that community.

Such strong relativism is rejected on the grounds that there is no evidence for this position among the sophists. This too can be countered. Chapter 2 argued for relativism in Herodotus' narration of the actions of Cambyses (3.38), who mocked the religious observances of his own and other peoples. The passage clearly answers the question "what constitutes right and wrong behaviour," as strong ethical relativism requires. In it, individual cultures are the framework relative to which all *nomoi* are noble or otherwise. That there is no possible objective view on these observances is made clear by the hypothetical experiment in which peoples are asked to

[5] Cf. Pl. *Cra*. 384d, for naming as conventional.
[6] Bett (1989), 156, on Hermogenes' position as non-relativistic on the basis that he does not accept Protagoras' philosophical position, which need not entail a rejection of relativism writ large.
[7] Bett (1989), 162.

select the best customs out of a pile of all human customs. The fact that each group would return with its own speaks to the tenacity of a people's relative sense of what is best. The concluding lyric from Pindar, that *nomos* is "king of all," further bolsters the claim that this is strong and not situational relativism. It posits that there is no standard higher than convention to serve as a stable foundation for an objective perspective on whether a given *nomos* is laughable or laudable.

Examples of strong relativism can be identified in philosophical texts as well. The *Dissoi Logoi* lists varying human cultural practices with a running commentary on their status as noble or shameful according to the individual culture. The Lydians, for example, find it seemly to prostitute their daughters and acquire dowries for them in this way, whereas in Greece such conduct would be shameful (2.16). There is no sense in which one cultural position is morally superior. As the philosopher concludes, "not all men observe the same things" (2.18: οὐ γὰρ πάντες ταὐτὰ νομίζοντι). Depending on the evaluative framework of a given culture, human beings consider differing moral predicates valid. To resist the conclusion that the *Dissoi Logoi* contains examples of strong relativism, Betts argues that those instances in which ethical frameworks are made relative to differing societies are "superficial."[8] His evidence for this is a fragment of an unknown poem that the *Dissoi Logoi* cites as a capstone to the entire argument – not the sections on cultural relativism alone. In it, ὁ καιρός, "opportunity," changes the value of what is seemly and shameful for differing humans. The introduction of *kairos* commits the author, for Betts, to a situational framework that would be objectively right for each group, given their own needs. This is to say, since *kairos* is a feature of circumstantial difference, it cannot rule out an objective viewpoint. On this reading, the point is not that the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* is exploring the potential for basic differences in the conception of what is seemly and shameful in the absence of any objective vantage point – but the situational differences between populations that give rise to objectively correct moral behaviors, given the circumstances.

It is certainly the case that there are instances of situational relativism in the *Dissoi Logoi*. These instances nonetheless fulfill the aim of the treatise in this part to create an identity between what is seemly and shameful in "reality" (2.1: τὸ σῶμα). So it is seemly for a woman to have sex with her husband indoors but unseemly out of doors. A single frame of reference, "for a woman," and single action, "sex," create a reality according to which

[8] Bett (1989), 148 n. 14.

"sex" is subject to opposing moral predicates because of the variation in circumstance. It is impossible to imagine the philosopher being able to make the argument that to the same woman, sex with her husband is both shameful and seemly in the same way, and so the alteration in circumstance creates the possibility according to which the single action and both predicates overlap. Still, it should be understood that there is a correct moral action dependent on circumstance and that this is an example of weak relativism.

The *Dissoi Logoi*'s transition to communities and cultures maintains the opposition between language (two terms, "seemly" and "shameful") and reality (a single action). The action that sustains both moral predicates, however, no longer relies on situational differences and "weak" relativism. Consider the first case study, on the difference between Greek peoples in terms of women's exercise and dress: "for the Spartans it is seemly that girls engage in athletics <and> appear in public without sleeves or tunics, but for the Ionians it is unseemly" (2.9). The single frame of reference is now women's athletic and dress codes, but there is no need to specify differing circumstances to create an overlap between both predicates and the frame of reference, since there is now a division in qualifiers, "for Spartans" and "for Ionians." For Bett, there is an unexpressed understanding of the polis of the Spartans or the peoples of Ionia turning to their objectively correct *nomos* on the basis of unique historical conditions. These historical conditions further imply an iron law of objectively correct values for the shameful and the seemly. But unlike the prior example, there is no situational qualification parallel to "indoors" and "out of doors." That is, no historical explanation is given to support a situational relativism that is underpinned by objective reasons for Spartan and Ionian *nomoi*. The plausible inference for this omission (which is shared by each example that follows) is that *nomoi* in fact cannot be assessed objectively by the referents "shameful" and "seemly," which aligns it with strong relativism. This is supported by the parallels in the *Histories*, where no historical events explain cultural difference as objectively valid due to a supra-principle.[9]

It is also supported by the fifth-century Hippocratic treatise, *On the Sacred Disease*, a speech advertising the author's superiority over his

[9] Pl. *Leg.* 637c–d hypothesizes that accusations of immorality that city-states lodge against one another can all be countered with, "Don't be astonished, friend; this is our *nomos*, perhaps among you there is another *nomos* about these things" (μὴ θαύμαζε, ὦ ξένε· νόμος ἔσθ' ἡμῖν οὗτος, ἴσως δ' ὑμῖν περὶ αὐτῶν τούτων ἕτερος). No objective standard above *nomos* is supplied for variability in the cultural practices of drunkenness and the license given to women.

contemporaries.[10] In a discussion of the brain's governance of human emotion and perception of "what is unseemly and seemly, base and good, pleasant and unpleasant" (*Morb.* 14: τά τε αἰσχρὰ καὶ τὰ καλὰ καὶ τὰ κακὰ καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἡδέα καὶ ἀηδέα), the author divides the brain's critical faculties to process these concepts into those that are judged by *nomos* and those perceived by advantage (τὰ μὲν νόμῳ διακρίνοντες, τὰ δὲ τῷ ξυμφέροντι αἰσθανόμενοι). Because the seemly and the shameful are measured according to convention *or* individual advantage, there is no single objective viewpoint that obtains and that can be superimposed over these factors. The treatise goes on to state that the same things do not satisfy humans because we "discern what is pleasurable or unpleasurable according to context (τοῖσι καιροῖσι)." This implies a framework specific to the individual but not one that is objectively right for each individual.

On a final note, these values are treated in the *Dissoi Logoi* as being applicable only by convention (*nomos*), rather than nature (*physis*). In the quotation that closes the section, the unknown poet asserts that there is a *nomos* (2.19) for mortals and that, according to it, nothing is noble or shameful in every respect. If there were an objective concept superior to these values, aligning it with nature over convention, then *physis* would have been a more rhetorically effective choice. As the text stands, all human *nomoi* regarding the seemly and the shameful are governed only by another contingent convention, *nomos*.

The above passages draw attention to the presence of arguments for strong relativism outside of Protagoras. If these passages are accepted as evidence, they constitute a claim for the wider reception of Protagorean relativism. They may equally point the way toward a reassessment of Bett's influential argument.

[10] Laskaris (2002), 73–124, argues for the speech's sophistic influence. Alternatively, for Thomas (2000), 246, it is "not particularly 'sophistic' in its rhetorical style."

APPENDIX 3

Knowledge and the Herodotean Narrator

The initial statement made by Herodotus at 1.5.3 on proceeding from "the first one I know (οἶδα) to have begun unjust deeds against the Greeks" strikes a confident posture. It is followed up quickly by another claim to knowledge: the Herodotean narrator "knows" (ἐπιστάμενος) that human happiness is ever on the move (1.5.4). Despite this assured beginning and its apparently strong truth claims, much of the discussion on epistemology and the *Histories* has focused on the absence of a rhetoric of truth. In what follows, I consider those instances in which the narrator makes self-referential claims to or disclaimers of knowledge and examine the extent to which these differ from truth claims.

The narrator assured of his knowledge reappears after the preface. Herodotus knows that the soils in Libya differ from those in Arabia and Syria (2.12.3) and that it is Egypt's border, if any, that separates Asia from Libya (2.17.1). He also claims knowledge of the *nomoi* observed by the Persians (1.131.1); this precise (ἀτρεκέως) information is contrasted with the unclear reports that he has received on the burials of Persian men (1.140.1–2).[1] In an assertion reliant on his deductions from a hypothetical experiment, Herodotus knows that all peoples would happily carry away their own evils if asked to exchange them with another people's (7.152.2).

Elsewhere, the desire for knowledge is a motivation toward historical inquiry, rather than a verification of its truthful outcome. Wishing to know if the stories he has heard in Memphis are true, Herodotus travels to have them corroborated in Thebes and Heliopolis (2.3.1). The same motivation prompts his inquiry into the reason for the Nile flooding in summer rather than winter and not giving rise to breezes (2.19.3). The decision to travel to Tyre is made "to know something certain" (σαφές τι εἰδέναι) about the god Heracles (2.44.1). There are also instances in which knowledge is disclaimed in the context of the fantastic, as in Herodotus'

[1] Cf. also 1.193.4, 2.122.2, 4.33.5–4.1, 5.22.1, 7.238.2, 9.43.1–2.

announcement that he does not know that there is a river Ocean (2.23) or whether the Tin Islands exist (3.115.1).[2] He has no eyewitnesses, after all, to vouch for these.[3]

Native traditions play an important role in the acquisition of knowledge. This stands in contrast to the criteria necessary for truthful narrative, which hearsay seldom satisfies, as we saw in Chapter 6. Herodotus says "I know" (οἶδα ἐγὼ) the story of the Lydians' burning of the temple of Athena Assessus because he heard it from the Delphians, whose oracle was consulted on the matter by the Lydian ruler, Alyattes (1.20); and "I know because I have heard in Dodona" (ὡς ἐγὼ ἐν Δωδώνῃ οἶδα ἀκούσας) that the Pelasgians used to call on the gods in prayer during their sacrifices (2.52.1); again, of the provenance of the story of the Persians controlling the water sources of the Chorasmians and their neighbors for additional revenue, "I know because I have heard it" (3.117.6: ἐγὼ οἶδα ἀκούσας). A more complex piece of knowledge is generated by a process of combining stories in Proconnesus and Metapontion in order to arrive at what Herodotus "knows" (οἶδα) happened in Metapontium 240 years after the second vanishing act of Aristeas (4.15.1). On another occasion, Herodotus is easily persuaded by his interlocutors that the man-made lake Moeris had its mounds of earth conveyed to the Nile, "because I knew by report" (ᾔδεα γὰρ λόγῳ) that something like this occurred in Nineveh (2.150.2). This principle applies to the historical actors as well, as when Gobyras counsels Darius that he "knew by report" (λόγῳ ἠπιστάμην) that the Scythians were hard to handle but had now *really* learned it (4.134.2: ἐξέμαθον). We might have expected a reversal of the verbs, with Gobyras learning by report and knowing by experience, but this is not what we find. Such passages tell against the position that Herodotus' knowledge claims depend exclusively on his own eyewitness testimony, important as this is. J. H. Lesher, for example, has found that "Herodotus held that knowledge, i.e. clear and certain awareness of truth, required confirmation on the basis of first-hand observation," a claim that is often repeated.[4] This is incompatible

[2] Cf. 4.46, 4.195, 7.26. At times, knowledge cannot be related, 1.51.4, 2.47.2, 2.123.3, 2.171.1, 4.43.7.

[3] 1.23: δὲ περὶ τοῦ Ὠκεανοῦ λέξας ἐς ἀφανὲς τὸν μῦθον ἀνενείκας οὐκ ἔχει ἔλεγχον. 3.115.2: τοῦτο δὲ οὐδενὸς αὐτόπτεω γενομένου δύναμαι ἀκοῦσαι, τοῦτο μελετῶν.

[4] Lesher (2010), 607. Starr (1968), 358, "Almost never does Herodotus proclaim anything outside the range of his own observation unmistakably true; more often it is *atrekes*, a term which means 'exact,' or 'precise' in the first instance."

with Herodotus' willingness to affirm knowledge derived from oral testimony.[5]

Elsewhere, it is clear that knowing a *logos* and knowing its truth value do not necessarily overlap. Beyond the one that he will relate, Herodotus states that he "knows" (1.95.1: ἐπιστάμενος) three other variants for the life of Cyrus, which are not the true report (τὸν ἐόντα . . . λόγον). In short, sources are at times identified as purveyors of "knowledge," which is not to say that the Halicarnassian vouches for the veracity of each of these episodes. What is interpreted as knowledge can also be delusion. The Agiad brother of Leonidas, Doreius, "knew . . . well" (5.42.1: εὖ . . . ἠπίστατο) that he would become king due to his manliness, but the Spartans defer to tradition and appoint Cleomenes.[6] The misleading nature of Doreius' knowledge points to its only provisional overlap with truth. Yet the irony of the passage clearly depends on the association of knowledge with true belief.

Evidence for the only partially authoritative position of knowledge is confirmed by its connection to a higher standard, "exactness." To avoid the danger of remaining forever among the Persians, Democedes feigns ignorance of Greek medicine. When pressed, he confesses that he has familiarity with the art from his conversations with doctors but does not know it "precisely" (3.130.2: ἀτρεκέως). Herodotus speaks of the Hellenic knowledge of Egypt as "exact" (ἐπιστάμεθα ἀτρεκέως) after there is a Greek presence in Egypt (2.154.4). Likewise, the Egyptians support their exact knowledge of the age of the gods Heracles, Dionysus, and Pan by pointing to the written record they have always kept (2.145.3); interestingly, precision here depends not only on physical presence but also on writing. The distinction between knowing and exact knowledge is also seen in the Egyptian version of the Greek *nostoi* after the Trojan War. They certify their information about Menelaus and Helen because they know parts of the story by inquiry (ἱστορίῃσι ἔφασαν ἐπίστασθαι) and other parts "precisely" because they happened on their own soil (2.119.3: ἀτρεκέως ἐπιστάμενοι). The stress in these instances is not so much on sight as on presence more generally.

At the start of the *Histories*, Herodotus claims to "know" that Croesus first committed injustices against the Greeks and that man's well-being is

[5] As de Jong (2012), 132, rightly finds: "Eyewitness reports being (until Plato) the height of reliability in Greek storytelling about the past."

[6] The capacity for the verb to mean "false belief, mis-placed confidence" in this context is noted by Hornblower (2004), 110 n. 84.

unstable. These declarations prepare the ground for an intrusive narrator, one whose presence in the remainder of the historical narrative will remain prominent. Knowledge can approximate a more rigorous standard alongside the language of precision, which often takes the form of direct observation or a close relation to it. It can also be produced through reliable hearsay, in a departure from Herodotus' practice elsewhere of depreciating *akoe*. Finally, knowing need not be synonymous with true belief. Due to these nuances in meaning and the importance of taking into account narrative context, interpreting what is at stake in "knowing" in the *Histories* must be done with care.

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